Summer Grasses, Autumn Wind

An Illustrated Translation of

Matsuo Bashō's

Narrow Roads of the Deep North

Dennis Kawaharada

(Color Edition)

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2021 corrigendum: In the 2018 printing, on page 9, the photo labeled "Ōmiwa Shrine (Muro-no-Yashima), in Tochigi City" was of a shrine there named Ōmiya. A photo of Ōmiwa Shrine appears in this printing.

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Front Cover Illustration: "Bashō and Sora Departing from Senju." From an illustrated scroll of *Oku no Hosomichi*. Yosa Buson (1716–1784). Itsuo Art Museum, Ikeda, Ōsaka.

Back Cover Illustration: "A Recluse Living Next to a Chestnut Tree in Sukagawa." From an illustrated scroll of *Oku no Hosomichi*. Yosa Buson (1716–1784). Kyōto National Museum.

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An Illustrated Translation of Matsuo Bashō's

Narrow Roads of the Deep North (Oku no Hosomichi)

with photographs and Edo Period art and maps

Dennis Kawaharada

Far Roads 2018

Dedication

To Mom, Matsuko Kawaharada (1925–2020), for supporting my eight years of studies in English and Japanese that made this translation possible.

Appreciation

To Karen Ono, for traveling hundreds of miles with me on the far roads of Oku to find and photograph the places Bashō visited on his journey; and to poet Richard Hamasaki for detailed editorial comments and suggestions on my translations of the verses.

Preface

At the end of spring 1689, the poet Matsuo Bashō left Edo on a five-month, thousand-mile walking journey to northern Honshu. The narrative of his travels, *Narrow Roads of the Deep North* (*Oku no Hosomichi*), is his most famous and beloved work.

The title of this translation, "Summer Grasses, Autumn Wind," refers to the two seasons of the journey. "Summer grasses" is from a verse Bashō composed after a visit to a hilltop in Hiraizumi where the twelfth-century commander Minamoto no Yoshitsune and his retainers died in a bloody fight:

summer grasses: all that's left of warriors' dreams

"Autumn wind" is a phrase that the poet uses in three verses in the second half of the narrative, including the following, written after he attended a memorial service for a younger poet in Kanazawa:

grave-mound, grieve, too; my crying voice is the autumn wind

Bashō was 45 years old when he set out on his journey, past the midpoint of his life. He was still in the summer of his poetic maturity, which included composing *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*, but he also felt the onset of his autumn. A chronic ailment made him aware of his mortality, and he was full of regrets about his passing life. Before he was too old and frail, he wanted to journey to the Deep North to visit poetic and historical places made famous in classical and medieval literature, so that he might learn the truths behind the words. He had also come to believe that the ideal life for a poet was to live on the road, free of material and domestic concerns and constraints and free to wander in harmony with the four seasons while discovering poetry in nature's perpetual creativity. In autumn 1685, he wrote, "to understand my verses, spend nights on the road with the autumn wind" (*tabine shite waga ku o shire ya aki no kaze*). Detaching himself from worldly matters was also in keeping with his Buddhist training, which taught him that he should prepare for the next life by dismissing the illusory desires of this one; so his journey was also conceived as a pilgrimage to temples and shrines.

The opening section sets the passage of time and human transiency as themes of the narrative. Within a cultural framework that provided conventional markers for the passing seasons, Bashō expresses the thoughts and feelings of one man on a fleeting journey down the cosmic river of time.

Notes on the Text and Illustrations

For this translation, I used the Japanese text of *Oku no Hosomichi* online at the University of Virginia's *Japanese Text Initiative* (2006). Bashō's aim was

poetic rather than documentary, and the narrative is best read as a literary text rather than a travelogue; but for readers interested in dates and itinerary, the notes include details from the diary of Sora, Bashō's traveling companion. (Scholars have noted discrepancies between the two accounts and consider Sora's more factual and accurate.)

At the site of an ancient fort, Bashō lamented the impermanence of the poetic places he went to Oku to find:

> From ancient times, many place names have been preserved in poetry and passed down to us; but hillsides slide into rivers and are swept away; roads are rebuilt, and stones vanish, buried beneath earth; old trees wither, replaced by saplings; times change, generations diverge, and traces of the past are lost in uncertainty. (20. Tsubo Stone Monument)

He never found some of the places he went to see; but the mountains, rivers, waterfalls, bays, coasts, and other geographical features he saw are still there today; so are famous temples and shrines, and the stones and artifacts.

In the notes are photographs of places Bashō visited, taken on five road trips between 2005 and 2017. The notes also include ink paintings from an illustrated scroll of *Oku no Hosomichi* by the eighteenth-century poet-painter Yosa Buson. The scroll is online at the Kyōto National Museum website.

Artwork from Edo Period (1603–1868) depicting landscapes, flora and fauna, travel and domestic scenes, and legendary and historical events illustrates references in the text. Although the works were produced as much as two centuries after Bashō's journey, Japan was closed to the outside world during the Edo Period and insulated from major cultural changes.

Cutouts from two pictorial maps from the nineteenth century identify the locations of places and roads and geographical features: *Detailed and Visualized Map of Great Japan* (*Dai Nihon saiken shishō zenzu*, 1830) by Shōtō Sanjin; and *Detailed Itinerary Map of Great Japan* (*Dai Nihon dōchū saikenki*, 1850) by Hashimoto Sadahide. The maps are online at *Japanese Maps of the Tokugawa Era*, University of British Columbia.

Many of the sites are described in modern travel guides. Some are out of the way and hard to get to or find, at the end of overgrown trails. To locate obscure places, I consulted various web sources, particularly, *Walking the Narrow Road to The Deep North*, a blog by an anonymous retiree who walked Bashō's journey in nine segments between 2006 and 2009; his website (no longer online) provided details of routes, with photos and maps.

At Google Maps, "Map of Bashō's *Oku no Hosomichi,*" based on my research and travels, marks the locations of places, with approximate routes that include distances between stops.

Dennis Kawaharada
Honolulu, 2017

Summer Grasses, Autumn Wind

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The Poet Bashō (1644–1694)
with his Travel Companion Sora (1649–1710)

Dressed for a pilgrimage: black Buddhist robes, with waraji (straw sandals) and kasa (hats woven from bamboo, straw, sedge, or bark). Kyoriku (1656–1715), a student of Bashō's, painted the portrait in 1693.

1. Before Departure

Months and days go by, transients for countless ages; and the passing years are travelers, too. Spending life afloat on boats or leading horses by the bridle, those who grow old traveling day after day make travel itself their home. Many an ancient also died while traveling.[1]

I, too—from what year was it?—invited by the cloud-scattering winds, I've yearned time and again to live on the road and went roaming along beaches and coasts[2]; last autumn, I returned to my neglected riverside retreat and swept away old spider-nests[3]; eventually the year ended; when the misty skies of spring returned, I felt an urge to travel beyond the Shirakawa Barrier[4]; a restless spirit possessed me, driving me to distraction; beckoned by the Guardian Gods of the Road,[5] I couldn't concentrate on matters at hand. No sooner had I mended a tear in my trousers, replaced the cord on my bamboo hat, and stimulated the circulation in my legs with moxa, the moon at Matsushima called out to my heart[6]; I sold my house and moved to Sampū's country residence.[7]

time to let go of even my thatched retreat, now a house for dolls[8]
草の戸も住替る代ぞひなの家 / *kusa no to mo sumi kawaru yo zo hina no ie*

On a post of my former retreat, I attached the first page of a linked-verse sequence that started with this poem.[9]

Notes

1. Two ancients who died on the road were Chinese poet Du Fu (712–770) and Japanese poet Saigyō (1118–1190), poet-wanderers whom Bashō admired and emulated; he quotes from their poetry in his narrative. In 1694, five years after the journey he describes in *Narrow Roads of the Deep North,* Bashō, too, died on a journey.

2. In 1684 Bashō set out on the first of a series of walking journeys that continued until his death. On this journey, he wandered along the Pacific Coast from Edo to Nagoya, then down the west coast of Ise Bay to Ise Imperial Shrine. He had come to believe that the ideal life of a poet was to be a wanderer seeking inspiration in the four seasons and natural beauty. In his account of his journey, *Weather-Beaten-in-Fields Journal*, he writes, "I left on a 1,000-li journey carrying no provisions, relying only on the words of one of the ancients who wrote, 'Under a midnight moon, I've entered an earthly paradise.'"

   In 1687–1688, Bashō roamed the Pacific Coast again, from Edo to Cape Irago, on the east side of Ise Bay, and later visited Suma and Akashi on the coast of the Inland Sea. He returned to Edo in autumn 1688. In his account of this journey,

Notes from a Travel Pack, as he departs under the changing skies of early winter, he writes that he felt like "a wind-blown leaf, uncertain where the journey would end"; a verse follows: "from the first wintry shower, 'Wanderer' shall be my name" (*tabibito to waga na yobaren hatsu shigure*).

During this period of wandering, Bashō also undertook two moon-viewing journeys, one to Kashima in 1687 and one to Sarashina in 1688. (See "Bashō's Life," 151.)

3. In 1672, at age 28, Bashō moved from his hometown of Ueno in Iga Province (Mie Prefecture) to Edo (Tōkyō), over two hundred miles to the east. In 1680, he moved from he center of Edo to a house in Fukagawa, on the outskirts, an area of reclaimed land in the delta of the Sumida River. Donated by Sugiyama Sampū, a wealthy fish merchant and student of Bashō's, the house was dubbed Banana-Plant Retreat (芭蕉庵, Bashō-an) after a banana plant (芭蕉, bashō) that grew there, a gift from a student. Feeling an affinity for the plant, the poet adopted the pen name "Bashō." (See "Bashō's Life," 149–150.)

4. The Shirakawa Barrier was the symbolic entrance to Oku (also called Mutsu), one of the northern provinces that Bashō wanted to visit. The original barrier gate, established in the seventh or eighth century, no longer existed in Bashō's time, but it was still famous because classical poets composed verses about crossing it.

5. The Guardian Gods of the Road (道祖神, Dōsojin, lit., Road Ancestral Gods), are depicted as a male-female couple, often carved on stones and placed for protection at the boundaries of villages or along roads. Villagers and travelers pray to Dōsojin for safety.

6. A bay with 260 pine-covered islands, Matsushima was famous for its scenic beauty and its moon. The bay was over two hundred miles north of Edo.

"Oiwake, Post Town 21." A driver leads a packhorse past Mt. Asama. Sixty-nine Post Towns of the Kisokaidō. Keisai Eisen (1790–1848).

Dōsojin stone in Narai, a former post town on the Kiso Road.

7. Bashō sold his retreat because he "did not expect to return from his journey" (Yuasa 36); or he assumed that even after he completed the journey, he would continue to live as an itinerant for the rest of his life.

8. Relinquishing his retreat, Bashō was committing himself to life on the road. The new owner of the thatched house "was married with a daughter and a grandchild" (Barnhill 113). The verse implies a contrast between Bashō's upcoming life as a homeless wanderer and the domestic life of the new residents. "Dolls" is a season-word (kigo), referring to the Dolls Festival, celebrated on 3.3 (April 22 in 1689). For the festival, still celebrated today, daughters are presented with dolls and wishes for good health and happiness. (See "Kigo and the Poetry of Seasons," 158–159; "Lunar Calendar," 166–168; and "Dolls Festival," 168.)

   My translations of Bashō's 17-syllable verses appear as single lines without breaks, as in Japanese texts, which are written vertically and read right-to-left, top-to-bottom. See the excerpt from a scroll of Bashō's text on p. 35, ending with a line of verse to the right of the illustration.

9. Bashō's verse was the starter verse (hokku) of a collaboratively composed linked-verse sequence (renga). A complete sequence has 36 or more verses; the first page (omote) contains the first 6 or 8 verses. (See "Renga and Haikai," 156.)

2. Setting Out

Twenty-seventh day of Yayoi: a hazy sky at first light; the morning moon had faded, and the summit of Mt. Fuji was faintly visible.[1] I felt disheartened, wondering when I would ever see the boughs of sakura blooming again at Ueno and Yanaka.[2]

My close friends had gathered the evening before and accompanied me on a boat to see me off. When we landed at a place called Senju,[3] the thought of a 3,000-li journey ahead constricted my heart.[4] At this crossroad of illusions, tears of separation fell.

spring passing: birds cry, fish eyes are tears[5]
行春や鳥啼魚の目は泪 / *yuku haru ya tori naki uo no me wa namida*

I hadn't taken a step on my journey when I opened my portable ink-and-brush case for the first time and composed this verse.

Friends lined the road to bid us farewell and stood there for as long as they could see the shadows of our backs.[6]

Notes

1. Yayoi (弥生, Increasing Life) was the third moon of the year and the last moon of spring. The 27th moon phase, a thin waning crescent two days before the new moon, rises before dawn in the east and fades into the morning sunlight. (In 1689, the twenty-seventh of Yayoi, 3.27, was May 17; see "Lunar Calendar," 166–168.)

   The 12,388-foot peak of Mt. Fuji, 63 miles to the west, is visible from Edo in the right atmospheric conditions.

2. Ueno and Yanaka are famous places in Edo for viewing sakura (cherry

Sakura blooming at Kiyomizu Hall, Kan'ei Temple, in Ueno. One Hundred Famous Views of Edo. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

blossoms), which usually bloom in late March or April. When Bashō left Edo in mid-May, the blossoms had already fallen, and he was uncertain if or when he might return to see them again.

3. Senju, on the north side of the Sumida River, was the first post town on the road to Nikkō, where Bashō was headed. Post towns were government-designated towns on major roads; travelers could find lodging, baths, and food, as well as packhorses and porters to carry passengers and freight to the next post town. Today under the north end of the bridge across the Sumida River at Senju is a memorial to commemorate the departure point of Bashō's journey. (See "Post Towns," 164; see Map 1, on p. 7, for the locations of Senju and Nikkō.)

4. "Three-thousand li" is a conventional hyperbole from Chinese literature suggesting "very far" (Kohl). Bashō refers to his shorter journey in 1684 as a "1,000-li journey." (See "1. Before Departure," note 2.) "Li" was a traditional Chinese unit of measure. During the Edo Period one li was fixed at 2.44 miles (3.927 km). On his journey to Oku, Bashō traveled about a 1,000 miles, not 7,320.

5. "Birds cry, fish eyes are tears": Commentators see the birds and fish as grieving over both the passing of spring and the departure of the travelers; others identify the two departing travelers as the crying birds flying off and the friends remaining behind as the teary fish.

6. Customarily, well-wishers line up, wave, and call out goodbyes until departing family, friends, or guests disappear. (See the cover illustration by Buson of the departure from Senju.) Bashō doesn't mention Sora, his travel companion, until "4. Muro-no-Yashima"; he formally introduces Sora in "6. Nikkō." An eccentric poet-wanderer named Rotsū was supposed to travel with Bashō, but Rotsū left Edo unexpectedly, and Sora, Bashō's neighbor in Fukagawa, took his place.

Travelers on a ferry boat at dusk on the Sumida River between Fukagawa, where Bashō's retreat was located, and Senju, where he departed on his journey to Oku. Mt Fuji is in the distance. Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji. Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849).

3. Sōka

This year—the second of Genroku, is it?[1]—I had a notion to journey on the long road to Ōu.[2] Although I might be burdened by the regrets of old age in that remote region,[3] I wanted to visit places my ears had heard of, my eyes not yet seen.[4] Whether I would survive and return was uncertain—I left that to the future to decide.[5] Such were my thoughts as I struggled to reach the post town of Sōka.[6]

Before leaving, I agonized over what to carry on the thin frame of my shoulders. I wanted to depart with just my body, nothing else, but ended up packing a mulberry-paper coat for warmth at night, a light cotton kimono, rain gear, ink-sticks, writing brushes, and so on; also, farewell gifts, which I couldn't refuse or discard. On the road, I had to get used to the burden of these things as I couldn't leave them behind.[7]

Notes

1. Genroku (元禄, Original Happiness) is the name given to the opening years of the reign of Emperor Higashiyama (1688–1704). Such era names (nengō) mark significant new beginnings, with the years numbered consecutively until a new nengō is established.

2. Ōu refers to the two northern provinces of Honshu island—Mutsu (陸奥), on the Pacific Ocean, and Dewa (出羽), on the Japan Sea. Ōu (奥羽) combines the second characters in the names of the two provinces. Mutsu was also known as Oku (奥). (See "Geography and Roads," 162–165, and "Map 11: Provinces, Domains, Barriers, Cities, and Towns," 163.)

3. "Old age" (白髪 haku-hatsu, lit., "white hair"): Bashō was 45. In a short prose piece composed after his journey to Oku, the aging poet reflected on the regrets he felt about his life as a wanderer and a poet: "As I reflect at length about the months and years that have drifted by, I realize the mistakes a bungling person like myself has made. There was a time when I envied samurai who serve a lord and are awarded income-producing land; and once, I considered withdrawing from the world and becoming a Zen monk. Instead I've tormented my body wandering like a windblown cloud that arrives nowhere, struggling to express feelings in poetry about birds and flowers" ("Account of the Dwelling-in-Illusion Retreat").

   "Remote region": Bashō uses a phrase from Chinese literature, "sky of Wu" (呉天, go-ten). Wu is associated with snowfall, which suggests hardship, growing old, and white hair (Barnhill 155-156, note 7).

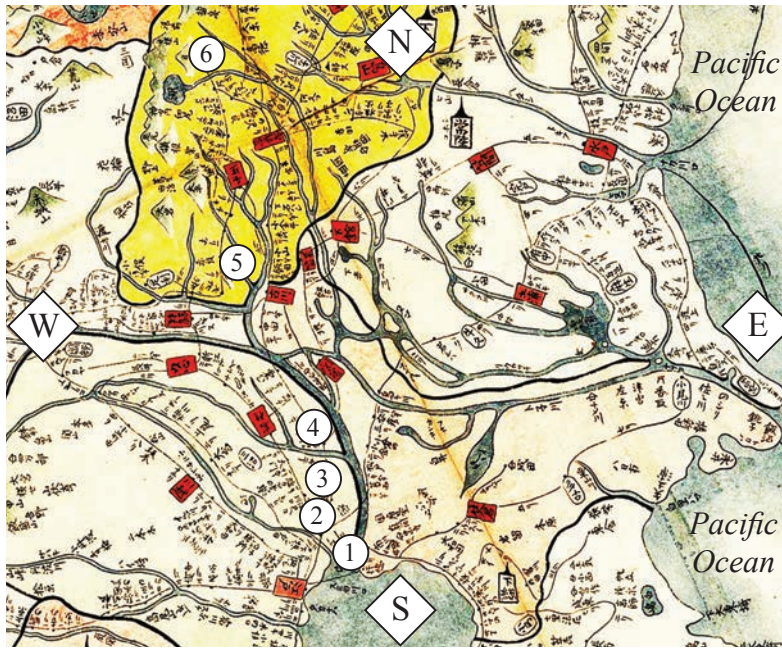
4. Bashō knew of poetic places in Ōu from references in classical poetry. Sora, his

traveling companion, made a list of such places, and Bashō planned to visit as many as he could find on his journey. (See "Poetry of Place," 159.)

5. Bashō suffered from a chronic ailment, perhaps chololithiasis (gallstones). He worried about his health and age, hence his uncertainty about returning. Doubts about undertaking the journey persisted until he arrived at the Shirakawa Barrier; once there, he tells the reader his heart was set on going.

6. Six miles north of Senju, Sōka was the second post town on the road to Nikkō. (See Map 1, 7.) That Bashō struggled to walk six miles from Senju to Sōka suggests how difficult the 1,000-mile journey would be for him. Sora's diary records that they continued past Sōka and spent the first night in Kasukabe, the fourth post town on the road, about 11 miles north of Sōka. They walked between 10 and 25 or so miles on their travel days. (See "Transportation," 165.)

7. One purpose of a pilgrimage was to let go of possessions and live as an ascetic on the road; Bashō wanted to pack only what was essential. A coat of layered mulberry-paper brushed with persimmon tannin for adhesion, strength and water-resistance was called kamiko (lit. paper clothing). "Rain gear" (雨具, ama-gu) may refer to a rain cape (合羽, kappa), waterproofed with oiled or waxed paper sewn between cotton fabric and modeled after the capes (kappa) of sixteenth-century Spanish missionaries to Japan. On his 1687–1688 journey, Bashō mentions packing a kappa (*Notes from a Travel Pack*).



1. Edo to Nikkō (1830 Map): ***Musashi Province***: (1) Fukagawa, the location of Bashō's retreat on the east side of the Sumida River; (2) Senju (the first post town on the road from Edo to Nikkō); (3) Sōka (post town 2); (4) Kasukabe (post town 4). ***Shimotsuke Province***: (5) Muro-no-Yashima, (6) Nikkō.

4. Muro-no-Yashima

We worshiped at Muro-no-Yashima Shrine.[1] According to Sora, my travel companion[2]:

> The deity here is Konohana-sakuya-hime [Princess of the Blossoming Trees]; she is of one body with Mt. Fuji.[3] After the princess entered a doorless chamber and set it afire, as she had vowed, Prince Ho-ho-demi was born, so her shrine is called Muro-no-Yashima [Eight Islands of the Chamber]; because of this story of the burning chamber, the word "smoke" is customarily used when composing verses about the shrine.[4]

Also, the fish called konoshiro is banned.[5] The gist of the shrine's history is widely known.

Notes

1. At Shintō shrines like Muro-no-Yashima, worshipers give thanks to nature or ancestral deities called kami and ask for blessings. Muro-no-Yashima, known as Ōmiwa Shrine today, is in Tochigi City. On May 18 (3.28), Bashō and Sora left Kasukabe (post town 4 on the Nikkō Road), walked 22 miles north to Mamada (post town 11), and spent the night there. The next day, they left the Nikkō Road and walked 10 miles north from Mamada to visit Muro-no-Yashima, then continued on to Kanuma, where they stayed overnight. Bashō composed a verse about this small village: "spring nightfall [spring ends]: village where no temple bell sounds" *(kane tsukanu sato wa nani wo ka haru no kure*).

2. Sora was raised by an uncle who was a Shintō priest in Ise Province (Mie Prefecture), where Bashō's hometown was located. Sora moved to Edo in 1681 and studied with a Shintō priest and scholar (Sato 138, endnote 4). Bashō relied on Sora's knowledge of Shintō and shrines.

3. During the Muromachi Period (1338–1573), Konohana-sakuya-hime, a Shintō fertility goddess (a daughter of Ōyamazumi, Great Deity of Mountains), became identified with Sengen or Asama, the volcano goddess of Mt. Fuji. The two goddesses are considered manifestations of the same kami (one body) and are worshiped at Sengen shrines around Mt. Fuji. Worshipers pray to them for easy childbirth and protection against fire.

4. Smoke is mentioned in classical poems about Muro-no-Yashima. Shirane notes, for example, that in one Muro-no-Yashima love poem, smoke is used "as a metaphor for suppressed desire" ("Narrow Road" 213, note 56).

   Sora connects the smoke in poems about this place to the Shintō love story

of Konohana-sakuya-hime, who married Ho-no-Ninigi, the grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu. Ninigi was sent from the Plain of High Heaven to rule the Land of Reed Plains below. When the fertility goddess became pregnant after only one night, her husband questioned whether the child was his. Ashamed and angered, she carried out a vow to enclose herself in a chamber (室, muro) and set it on fire, declaring that if the child died, it was someone else's, but if it lived, it was her husband's. Unharmed by the fire because of her purity, the princess gave birth to three sons in the burning chamber: Ho-no-susori no Mikoto, born when the fire broke out; Ho-no-akari no Mikoto, born when the fire reached its height; and Hiko-Ho-ho-demi no Mikoto (Prince Ho-ho-demi), born as the fire subsided (*Nihongi* 85). Prince Ho-ho-demi was the grandfather of Jimmu, the first Emperor of Japan.

In *Kojiki*, Japan's earliest historical record, presented to the Imperial Court in 712, the Land of Reed Plains, where Ho-no-Ninigi descended to rule, is called Ō-yashima-kuni (大八州国, Great Eight-Island Country) (28). Later the land became known as Yamato, then Nihon or Japan. The Eight Islands (八嶋, Yashima) were procreated by Izanagi and Izanami, brother and sister creation deities, who also gave birth to the sun goddess Amaterasu. (See "23. Matsushima," note 3.)

Bashō composed a verse about Muro-no-Yashima: "smoke rising up with the shimmering heat" (*itoyū ni musubi tsukitaru kemuri kana*).

5. Sato points out that broiled konoshiro (gizzard shad) smells like a corpse being cremated, but commentators differ inconclusively about the reason for banning the fish (139, endnote 5). Perhaps the smell of the burnt fish was anathema to a goddess whose flesh doesn't burn. Translators assume that the ban applies to broiling and eating konoshiro, but smelly broiled fish like sardine (along with pointed leaves like ayame or holly), are also customarily used in some areas to ward off diseases and disasters at spring equinox. Bashō composed a poem about this custom: "ayame arrayed with sardine skulls on the eaves" (*ayame ikekeri noki no iwashi no sarekōbe*).

Ōmiwa Shrine (Muro-no-Yashima), Tochigi City.

5. “Hotoke” Gozaemon

On the thirtieth, we stopped overnight at the foot of Mount Nikkō.[1] The innkeeper told us, “I’m known as ‘Hotoke’ Gozaemon.[2] Everyone calls me this because I hold to the principles of honesty and integrity in all I do. So even if you stay for only one night on these grass pillows, please make yourselves at home and rest up from your journey.”[3]

What sort of manifestation of Hotoke was he, appearing in this corrupt and impure world to help mendicant Buddhist pilgrims like us? I observed his doings carefully: he was simple and undiscerning, but stubbornly honest and frank. “Firmness of character without duplicity is akin to ideal humanity”; the innkeeper’s innate goodness was justly praised.[4]

Notes

1. The town of Nikkō lies six miles east of Mt. Nikkō. Bashō dates their arrival 卅日 (misoka, thirtieth day) [of the third moon], or 3.30. Commentators note that the third moon had only 29 days that year. Sora’s diary gives the date of their arrival at Nikkō as the first day of the fourth moon (4.1).

2. Hotoke (仏) is a name for Buddha; also, a nickname for someone benevolent or enlightened.

3. Grass pillows (草の枕, kusa no makura) were made by stuffing grass into cloth cylinders; makeshift pillows were also made by bundling grass. Grass-bundle pillows were associated with travel and also suggest poverty.

4. Bashō quotes from Confucius’ *Analects* (Book XIII, Chapter XXVII). “Ideal humanity” is a translation of *jin* (仁, humanity, goodness, benevolence), the highest of Confucian virtues. Confucian philosophy was introduced from China in the sixth and seventh centuries and has profoundly influenced Japanese social, political, and moral thinking.

6. Nikkō

On the first day of the fourth moon, we worshiped at the sacred mountain.[1] In ancient times, the mountain was named Nikō [Two Storms], but when Great Teacher Kūkai founded a temple here, he changed the name to Nikkō [Sunlight].[2] He must have foreseen a thousand years into the future; now illuminated by a radiant, unified heaven, with blessings overflowing at the eight borders, the four social classes live together in peace.[3] Shrinking in awe and reverence, I set aside my writing brush.[4]

oh so glorious! sunlight on green leaves, young leaves[5]
あらたうと青葉若葉の日の光 / *ara tōto aoba wakaba no hi no hikari*

Kurokami-yama [Black-Hair Mountains] were shrouded in mist and still white with snow.[6] Sora wrote:

head shaved, hair discarded; at Kurokami-yama, clothes for a new season[7]
剃捨て黒髪山に衣更 / *sori sutete kurokamiyama ni koromogae*

Sora's family name is Kawai, his given name Sōgorō.[8] We lived next to each other in Edo, sharing the shade of a bashō [banana plant], and he helped me with the chores of obtaining firewood and water. Now he was delighted we were traveling together to see Matsushima and Kisa Lagoon; moreover, he was with me to lighten the hardships of the road. On the morning of our departure his head was shaved, and he had changed into the black apparel of a pilgrim; he had also replaced two characters in his name: 惣五 [Sōgo, All-Five] was now 宗悟 [Sōgo, Spiritual Enlightenment][9]; thus his Kurokami-yama poem; he expresses his strong commitment to our pilgrimage in "clothes for a new season."

We walked a mile and a half up the mountain road and arrived at a waterfall that cascaded from above a hollow in a tall cliff down to a green pool strewn with hundreds of rocks. Secluding yourself in the hollow, you can see the back of the falls, hence its name, Urami-no-Taki [See-the-Back Waterfall].

confined for a while behind a waterfall: summer's first austerity[10]
暫時は瀧に篭るや夏の初 / *shibaraku wa taki ni komoru ya ge no hajime*

Notes

1. The first day of the fourth moon, 4.1, was May 20 in 1689. (See "Moon Phases and Dates," 167.) The sacred mountain is Mt. Nikkō, known today as Mt. Nantai.

   The fourth moon of the year, Uzuki (卯月), was the first moon of summer. Uzuki is short for Unohana Tsuki, Moon of Unohana (deutzia), a flower that blooms during this month. The names of the fourth moon and the fourth-moon flower are written with the character for rabbit (卯, u), the fourth Chinese zodiac sign.

2. Mt. Nikkō (日光, Sunlight) was formerly named Mt. Nikō (二荒山, read Futara-yama or sinicized, Nikō-san, Mountain of Two Storms). The old name referred to spring and autumn storms that come from the northeast, a direction associated with malevolent spirits that bring disasters and misfortunes (Kohl).

   Great Teacher Kūkai (774–835) is one of Japan's most celebrated Buddhist saints. He founded Shingon Buddhism and established temples throughout the nation, including at Mt. Nikkō. He is known posthumously as Kōbō Daishi (弘法, Kōbō, or Propagator of Buddhist Law, and 大師, Daishi, or Great Teacher).

   Shingon is an esoteric Buddhist sect that integrates Shintō and mountain worship into its beliefs and practices. (See "Religious Contexts," 160–162.) Mt. Nikkō (or Mt. Nantai, 男体, Male Body) belongs to a triad of mountains worshiped as deities who protect and bless the region; Mt. Nyohō (女峰, Female Peak) and Mt. Tarō (太郎, Plump Son) are the other two members of the triad ("Nikkōsan Shinkō," *Encyclopedia of Shintō*).

3. Bashō suggests that in changing the mountain's name from "Two Storms," to "Sunlight," Kūkai foresaw the peace and prosperity of Bashō's time, 900 years later. After an era known as Warring States (1467–1603), Tokugawa Ieyasu

Mt. Nikkō, aka Mt. Nantai, in the Kurokami Mountains of NIkkō. The mountains beyond Lake Chuzenji (left) have remnants of snow in mid-May. Nikkō town lies six miles to the east.

Ishi-dorii (Stone Gateway) is part of the original Tōshōgū, built in 1617 in Nikkō.

(1543–1616) defeated rival warlords and unified the nation. In 1600, the emperor appointed him shogun, and he established a samurai government that maintained civil order for two and a half centuries, an era known as the Tokugawa Peace and also the Edo Period (1603–1868), after the city that served as the headquarters of the shogunate.

In Confucian tradition, the four social classes, in descending order of status, were scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants. In Japan, the scholar class included the educated aristocrats, samurai, and priests who ruled the nation. The Tokugawa Shogunate tried to maintain the traditional status of each class, but wealthy artisans and merchants, prospering in cities and towns, rose in status.

4. Commentators suggest that Bashō felt "awe and reverence" when he went to worship at Tōshōgū, a shrine dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu. (See note 3.) After Ieyasu's death in 1616, his family deified him as Daigongen ("Great Buddha Manifested in a Shintō God") and his spirit was worshiped for the protection of the nation. Tōshō (東照), Ieyasu's posthumous name, means "Eastern Illumination." Sora records that he and Bashō visited Tōshōgū on 4.1.

5. "Young leaves" (wakaba) and "green leaves" (aoba) are season-words indicating early summer and summer (See "Kigo and the Poetry of Seasons," 158.)

6. Kurokami-yama (黒髪山, Black Hair Mountain/Mountains) is a name for the mountains west of Nikkō town. The name is used in the titles of Edo Period prints, for example, "Kirifuri Waterfall, Mt. Kurokami, Shimotsuke Province," in *A Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces*, by Katsushika Hokusai, and "Kirifuri Falls in the Kurokami Mountains in Shimotsuke Province," in *Famous Views of the Kantō Region*, by Utagawa Hiroshige. Kirifuri Falls is in the hills below Mt. Nyohō, which lies four miles northeast of Mt. Nikkō. (See note 2 above, on the three mountains of Nikkō.)

Kurokami-yama is also a poetic place from a poem in which a poet anticipates his aging and white hair, symbolized by falling snow: "It will happen to me not far in the future: on Mt. Black Hair falls white snow" (Sato 48, note 32).

7. Instead of worrying about aging and white hair like the Kurokami-yama poet (see note 6), Sora shaved his head and became a Buddhist pilgrim. "Koromo-gae" (衣更, "clothes for a new season," lit., "changing clothes") is a season-word indicating the first day of summer, when people customarily change into lighter apparel anticipating warmer weather. Sora adds another meaning: his new clothing expresses a new religious purpose.

8. Sora was the pen name of Kawai Sōgorō.

9. Sora may have inked his new name, "Spiritual Enlightenment," on his bamboo hat to express his new religious purpose. (See "39. Yamanaka," note 6.)

10. "Summer's first austerity": In Bashō's phrase "ge no hajime" (夏の初, lit. "start of summer"), "ge" is the sinicized reading of the kanji for summer, 夏 (natsu), and 初 (hajime) means "start" or "first." But "Ge" also refers to the Buddhist practice of ge-goromi—three months of summer retreat for religious austerities, from 4.16 to 7.16. Austerities typically include confinement to a room, fasting, meditation, reading, and copying sutras (Kohl; Shirane, "Narrow Road" 216).

    Summer is also the season for pilgrimages, with austerities that include treks over great distances to temples and shrines, living on the road with only bare essentials, and ascending dangerous trails to mountain summits to focus the mind on achieving enlightenment. Still practiced today, pilgrimages often begin with ritual purification, like standing under a waterfall while chanting prayers.

Nikkō hills near Kirifuri Falls in May, with Black Hair Mountains [Kurokami-yama] rising beyond: "oh so sublime! sunlight on green leaves, young leaves."

Bashō's confinement at the waterfall was the first austerity of his pilgrimage, which became increasingly arduous. He trekked on muiddy roads and sheltered from the midsummer rains in ramshackle lodgings with fleas, mosquitoes, and lice; climbed icy Mt. Gassan; and languished in the extreme heat of late summer and early fall. Ironically, Sora, five years younger than Bashō, left the journey to recuperate from ailments while the older Bashō trekked on after rejuvenating himself in the hot-spring waters of Yamanaka.

Urami Falls: in the shadow of the ledge that leads to the hollow behind the Falls is a Buddhist altar stone.

7. Nasu

I knew someone in a place called Kurobane, in Nasu, so we headed there on a straight path across the wild fields. While walking toward a village in the distance, rain started falling and the sun set. We rented lodging for the night at a farmer's house, and at daybreak, continued across the fields.[1]

Along the way we passed a horse at pasture. Unsure of our whereabouts, we approached a man cutting grass and bemoaned our situation. A rustic, but not without compassion, he replied: "Well, what would be best? The paths in these fields go every which way, and travelers unfamiliar with the area can easily get lost. This horse knows the way, and he'll return here from wherever he stops."

As we left, two small children ran after the horse. One, a little princess, was named Kasane—an unheard-of name, but charming. Sora wrote:

> Kasane—an eight-layered wild pink should be given her name[2]
> かさねとは八重撫子の名成べし / *kasane to wa yae nadeshiko no na narubeshi*

Before long, we arrived at the village and sent the horse back with payment tied to the saddle.

Notes

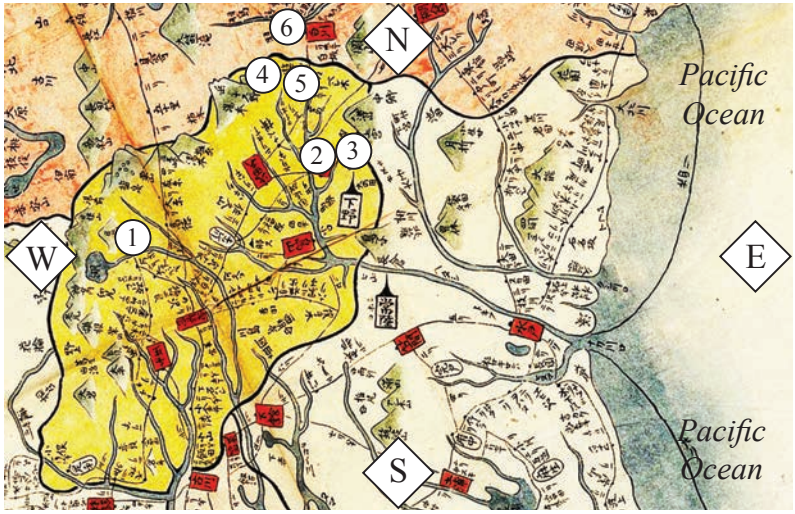
1. Bashō and Sora left Nikkō on May 21 (4.2), heading across the Nasu Plains to Kurobane, a town about 30 miles east. (See Map 2, 17.) No longer on a well-marked main road, they needed help in finding their way. They spent the night at a place called Tama-nyu, about halfway to their destination.

2. The wild pink (撫子, nadeshiko, lit., "petted child") is a flower that blooms in summer. Sora added "yae" (八重, "doubled," lit., "eight-layered") to "nadeshiko"

"Two small children ran after the horse." Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

to suggest that Kasane, abundantly charming, was like a wild pink with eight layers of petals rather than just one. Kasane, the girl's name, suggests the verb "kasaneru" (重ねる), "to pile up," "heap up," or "layer." Bashō commented later that if he ever had a daughter, he would name her "Kasane" after the little princess of Nasu (Kohl).

Wild pinks, with a rooster and a hen. Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849).



2. Nikkō to Shirakawa Barrier (1830 Map). ***Shimotsuke Province***: (1) Nikkō, (2) Kurobane, (3) Ungan Temple, (4) Sesshōseki, (5) Ashino. ***Mutsu Province***: (6) Shirakawa Barrier.

8. Kurobane

We called on a certain Jōbōji, chief retainer of the lord of Kurobane. Delighted by our unexpected visit, he talked with us day and night. Tōsui, his younger brother came by mornings and evenings and took us to his own residence; we were also invited to the homes of their relatives. So the days went by.[1]

One day we wandered to the outskirts of town to see the traces of the grounds where mounted archers once competed at shooting at dogs with blunted arrows; then we pushed through a field of bamboo grass and visited the ancient burial mound of Tamamo-no-mae.[2]

We also worshiped at Hachiman Imperial Shrine. I heard that before Yoichi shot his arrow at the fan, he addressed a vow "above all to the god of my homeland and family, the Great Hachiman," venerated at this very shrine; I was deeply moved by the divine response.[3] As evening fell, we returned to Tōsui's residence.

Invited to Kōmyō-ji, a temple of the Shugen sect, we worshiped at the hall for pilgrims.[4]

in summer hills, we call on the wooden rain-sandals to bless our departure[5]
夏山に足駄を拝む首途哉 / *natsu yama ni ashida o ogamu kadode kana*

Notes

1. Bashō and Sora were hosted for 12 days (May 22–June 3) by two brothers, both poets. Bashō was a close friend of the younger brother, whose pen name was Tōsui. (Kohl). The older brother, Jōbōji (1658–1730), was the chief retainer of Ōzeki Masutsune, lord of Kurobane. Jōbōji was in charge of the domain while the lord was away in Edo. During his stay in Kurobane, Bashō held a linked-verse session with Sora and Tōsui and his friends participating. (Sato 52; note 45; for notes on renga, see "Renga and Haikai," 156.)

2. Tamamo-no-mae was a legendary concubine of the retired Emperor Toba (r. 1107–1123). After Toba fell ill, a Daoist diviner saw that Tamamo was possessed by a malevolent fox spirit, which caused the illness. The spirit was exorcised and fled from the capital of Kyōto to Nasu, where it was hunted down and killed by imperial archers. The dead spirit congealed into a rock known as Sesshōseki ("Killing Stone"), which Bashō and Sora visited on their way from Kurobane to Shirakawa. (See "10. Sesshōseki and Ashino.")

   According to legend, Tamamo Inari Shrine is near the site where the fox spirit

was killed. The spirit had disguised itself as a cicada. The archer Miura-no-Suke saw its true form reflected in a pond near the shrine and fired an arrow that killed the fox spirit. Miura is said to have established the practice of mounted archers shooting at dogs with blunted arrows to hone their archery skills (Kohl).

3. Bashō alludes to the story of Yoichi, a famous archer from Nasu. During

Center and right panels of a triptych: The nine-tailed fox spirit that possessed Tamamo-no-mae hunted down on the Nasu Plains by Miura-no-Suke. Utagawa Kunihisa II (1832–1891). *The left panel depicts a second archer on horseback, Kazusa-no-Suke, shooting at the fox.*

Tamamo Inari Shrine. The pond where the fox spirit was slain is to the right of the gateway.

the Gempei War (1180–1185), in which the Genji (Minamoto family) defeated the Heike (Taira family) to gain control of the government, Yoichi served the Genji. At the battle of Yashima on Shikoku, he was ordered to shoot down a fan on a Heike boat bobbing offshore. The fan was a little beyond arrow range, so he rode on horseback into the shore break and prayed for success to "Great Bodhisattva Hachiman and ye gods of my province, at Nikkō, Utsu-no-miya, and Nasu Yuzen!," vowing to break his bow and kill himself if he failed; then he fired an arrow and hit the fan, which fluttered down into the waves (McCullough, *Tale* 368), foreshadowing the fall of the Heike.

Genji archer Nasu no Yoichi on horseback in the waves, aiming his arrow at the fan on the Heike boat offshore (c.1801). Bunrō (n.d.).

Hachiman Imperial Shrine is called Kanemaru Hachimangū and also Nasu Shrine today. Sora's diary indicates that he and Bashō went there the day after they visited the burial mound of Tamamo-no-mae.

Hachiman is the deity of the Genji clan. He is said to be the spirit of Emperor Ōjin (r. 270–310), from whom the Genji claim descent. Hachiman, "Eight Banners,"

The front gate at Hachiman Imperial Shrine, aka Nasu Shrine. Statues of guardian archers sit on both sides of the entrance.

Marker for the site of Kōmyō Temple at the end of a short path off a country lane in Yoze.

refers to the eight celebratory banners that fell from the sky at Ōjin's birth. After the Genji established their rule over the nation, Hachiman became the tutelary deity of the samurai class.

4. Kōmyō Temple no longer exists, but its site is marked by a memorial stone off a narrow country road in Yoze, Nasu, near where Tōsui's residence was located. The Nasu Kōmyō Temple was founded by the archer Yoichi after he returned from the Gempei War. During the war, Yoichi prayed at Kōmyō Temple in Fushimi, near Kyōto.

   Later, the Nasu Kōmyō Temple was rebuilt as a Shugen temple. Shugendō is a syncretic sect that combines Buddhism with elements of Shintō, Daoism, folk religious beliefs, and mountain asceticism. "Shu-gen" is formed from two kanji: 修, shu, "to discipline oneself," and 験, gen, "to benefit from austerities"; 道, dō, literally, "Way," refers to the teachings of a religion or sect. Shugendō was founded by legendary mountain ascetic En-no-Gyōja ("En the Ascetic," b. 634). Shugen-ja (practitioners of Shugendō) undertake mountain pilgrimages that include rituals and austerities aimed at achieving enlightenment. Each pilgrimage is seen as a journey of death and rebirth through the three realms of the past, present, and future, often represented by three mountain peaks, such as the three sacred mountains of Nikkō or Three Mountains of Dewa, which Bashō and Sora climbed later in the journey.

   When Kōmyō became a Shugen temple, it featured a statue of En-no-Gyōja and sold charms to ward off or cure foot and leg ailments and injuries; the wife of the chief priest was Tōsui's sister (Kohl).

5. Wooden rain sandals (ashida, 足駄) are associated with En-no-gyōja, the founder of the Shugen sect. (See note 4 above). Just as Yoichi called on Hachiman, a deity of warriors, to guide the flight of his arrow before he shot down the Heike fan (see note 3 above), Bashō prayed to En, a deity of mountain ascetics and pilgrims, for a blessing before departing on his journey. "Kadode" (首途), which ends the verse, means both "departure" and also "starting a new life."

Wooden rain-sandals have “teeth” or risers to keep the feet above rain puddles. Shugen pilgrims wore ashida to add to the austerity of walking great distances up and down mountain trails. The ashida that En wore had extra-tall teeth to make them “intentionally difficult to walk on” in order to increase his strength and fortitude (Barnhill 157, note 29. See the print “En-no-Gyōja Opens Mount Fuji for Worship” below.)

Top**: “En-no-Gyōja Opens Mount Fuji for Worship.”* One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji. Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). *En’s wooden rain-sandals (ashida) are depicted on the ground to the left.* ***Bottom: *The bridge and front gate to Ungan Temple.*

9. Ungan Temple

In this province, deep behind Ungan Temple, are traces of the mountain meditation hut of Master Butchō:

> a thatched retreat not even five feet high and wide, but still so vexing to build; if only it wouldn't rain.

Some time ago, I heard from Butchō that with pine-wood charcoal he wrote this verse on a rock.[1] To see the remains of his hut, walking-stick in hand, I went to Ungan Temple; others were invited to come along, and a group walked with me, many young people, boisterously merry along the way. Before we knew it, we arrived at the foot of the mountain. The mountain's interior appeared far up a valley road along which grew dark pines and cedars and moss dripping-wet; the weather of summer's first moon was still chilly. After seeing the Ten Scenic Spots, we crossed a bridge and entered the temple gate.[2] Wondering where the traces of Butchō were, I climbed the mountain behind the temple; there atop a rock, a small retreat was built against a cliff-side cave; I felt as if I were looking at the Death Gate of Zen Master Myō or the stone chamber of Priest Hōun:[3]

> even woodpeckers don't damage this retreat in a stand of summer trees[4]
> 木啄も庵はやぶらず夏木立 / *kitsutsuki mo io wa yaburazu natsu kodachi*

I left this impromptu verse on a post of the hut.

Notes

1. Butchō (1643–1715) was a Rinzai Zen priest and the twenty-first abbot of Kompon Temple in Kashima, Hitachi Province, where he was born. He trained at the temple from age 8. He was a priest at Ungan Temple in 1678 (Kohl). Bashō practiced meditation under him in Edo around 1682, when Butchō was petitioning the shogunate to restore land taken from Kompon Temple by nearby Kashima Shrine. When Bashō visited Kashima on a moon-viewing journey in 1687, Butchō had resigned his abbotship and was living as a recluse at the foot of a hill near the temple; the ironic verse expresses regret that he felt a need to build a shelter from the rain (Sato 54, note 52). Butchō's title, Oshō (和尚, Master), designates a high priest and teacher, typically one who serves as head of a temple.

2. The Ten Scenic Spots consisted of "prominent rocks and stands of plum and bamboo trees" (Sato 54, note 54).

3. Myō (Miao, 1238–1295) was a Chinese Zen Master (禅師, Zenji) who meditated for 15 years in a cave whose entrance was dubbed the Death Gate; Hōun (Fa-yün, 467–529), a Chinese priest, lived in a hut on a rock (Sato 54, notes 56 and 57).

4. Bashō's verse alludes to the angry spirit of Mononobe no Moriya (d. 587), who was reincarnated as a woodpecker (木啄, kitsutsuki, lit. "tree-pecker"), also called tera-tsutsuki, "temple-pecker" (Sato 56, note 58). Buddhist temples are built primarily of wood. Mononobe opposed Buddhism after it was introduced to Japan from Korea during the sixth century. He set fire to the first Buddhist temple and threw Buddhist images into the canals of Naniwa (Ōsaka). He was slain in a battle against the proponents of Buddhism. The gist of Bashō's poem is that Butchō's retreat is so venerable, even woodpeckers don't harm it; also, figuratively, Buddhist teachings are impervious to Mononobe's angry spirit.

***Top**: Ungan Temple, in the summer woods of the hills east of Kurobane.*
***Bottom**: A woodpecker below a grosbeak.* Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806).

10. Sesshōseki and Ashino

From Kurobane, we went to see Sesshōseki [Killing Stone]; our host provided a horse, and the man leading it surprised me with a humble request for a poem-card, hoping for something memorable.

turn the horse toward the side of the field—I hear a hototogisu[1]
野を横に馬牽むけよほとゝぎす / *no o yoko uma hikimuke yo hototogisu*

Sesshōseki sits in a mountain recess where a hot spring flows; the stone's toxic spirit continues to kill; so many dead bees, butterflies, and other insects were piled up around it, we couldn't see the color of the sand.[2]

We also went to the village of Ashino, where the willow of "clear water flowing" survives on the bank of a rice paddy. A man named Kōho, the district administrator, told me from time to time that he wanted to show me the tree, so I wondered where it was; today, I rested in its shade.[3]

one rice paddy planted before I stood and left the willow[4]
田一枚植て立去る柳かな / *ta ichimai uete tachisaru yanagi kana*

Notes

1. The driver requests a tanzaku (短冊) or poem card—a strip of mulberry-paper on which a verse is written. (For photos of three tanzaku, see p. 95.)

   "Hototogisu" (柳, lesser cuckoo) is a summer season-word. Bashō wants the horse turned so he can look for the hototogisu; he also suggests that the driver and horse behave like poets and look for it with him.

2. After the malevolent fox spirit that possessed Tamamo-no-mae was hunted down and killed in Nasu (see "8. Kurobane," note 2), it turned into the toxic stone known as Sesshōseki. The stone is located 18 miles northwest of Kurobane at the back of a sulfurous gulch near Nasu Hot Spring. (See Map 2, 17.) The stone's negative karma killed living things that came near or touched it. Bashō composed a poem about the stone (Ueda *Bashō* 235): "stone's fumes, turning summer grasses red, dew hot (*ishi no ka ya natsugusa akaku tsuyu atsushi*).

   According to the fifteenth-century nō drama *Sesshōseki*, a Zen priest traveling through Nasu heard about the Killing Stone and performed an exorcism to release the fox spirit. The stone broke apart, and the spirit emerged and asked to be enlightened to the Buddhist Law. After being saved, the spirit promised to do no more evil and vanished (*the Nō.com)*.

   Bashō notes, however, that the stone continued to kill. Sato suggests that toxic volcanic fumes killed insects around the stone (56, note 59).

***Top**: Hototogisu (lesser cuckoo).* Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861).
***Bottom**: Sesshōsseki (Killing Stone).*

3. Bashō quotes from poem by Saigyō (1118–1190): "at the roadside, clear water flowing and a willow's shade: I stopped, telling myself to rest a while" (Sato 56, note 62). At age 23, Saigyō gave up his status as a Genji samurai to become a wandering priest, poet, and mountain recluse. He traveled to Oku five centuries before Bashō.

The district administrator who told Bashō about the willow was Ashino Suketoshi (1637–1692), who had a house in Edo near Bashō's (Ueda, *Bashō* 236).

Willows were planted for shade along city streets and country roads, as well

***Top**: "The Killing Stone sits in a mountain recess where a hot spring flows."*
***Bottom**: At Sesshōseki, statues of Jizō Bodhisattva, worshiped to alleviate suffering in this life and shorten time in hell. Pilgrims and travelers also pray for safety to Jizō at roadside shrines.*

as in rice fields. In *An Account of a Journey to the East* (c. 1242), the anonymous author praises a former governor of Musashi Province for planting willow trees to provide roadside shade for travelers: "willows on the plain left by a planter who has passed on: men will continue to rely on their shade" (McCullough, *Japanese Prose* 430).

Saigyō's willow was the subject of *Yugyō Yanagi*, a nō play by Kanze Kojirō Nobumitsu (1425–1516): Yugyō Shōnin (Itinerant Holy One) retraces Saigyō's journey to Oku and encounters the tree's spirit, which tells him that it's the tree Saigyō visited. (Kohl; see "43. Tsuruga," note 6, on the title Yugyō Shōnin.)

Saigyō. Kikuchi Yōsai (1781–1878).

4. Resting under then leaving from the shade of a willow where Saigyō stopped to rest on his way to Oku, Bashō pays homage to his predecessor and hopes to find inspiration from him to undertake the long journey ahead.

   A willow in rice fields 12 miles from Sesshōseki commemorates Saigyō's and Bashō's visits to Ashino. (See the photo below; also Map 2, 17.) The rice-planting imagery in the verse links to imagery in subsequent verses: rice-planting songs at Sukagawa, hands planting rice seedlings at Shinobu, and early-ripening rice at Kurobe.

In newly planted rice fields, willow trees at the site commemorating visits to Ashino by Saigyō and Bashō.

11. Shirakawa Barrier

Day after day of doubts piled up; but once we arrived at the Shirakawa Barrier, my heart was set on undertaking the journey.[1]

"If I had some means, I'd like to send word to the capital . . ." Of the three barrier gates, this one in particular inspired poets to record their feelings about crossing it.[2] Imagining the autumn wind and crimson leaves memorialized in poems, I felt even more deeply the transient beauty of summer's leafy green boughs.[3] The white bloom of fourth-moon flowers and wild roses evoked sensations of snow, too.[4]

Kiyosuke noted that the ancients would straighten their caps and change their clothes before crossing the barrier. [Sora wrote:]

dressed up with fourth-moon flowers, our finest wear for a barrier-crossing[5]
卯の花をかざしに関の晴着かな / *u no hana o kazashi ni seki no haregi kana*

Notes

1. Bashō had doubts about the journey, conceived on a whim, even before he left Edo. In a short prose piece ("A Grass Hut Too"), he wrote, "With the distant skies of the journey weighing on my mind, feeling apprehensive, I handed over the hut

Shirakawa Barrier site in June.

I had been living in to someone I knew" (Barnhill 113)

Shirakawa Barrier was established in the seventh or eighth century at the entrance to Oku (Mutsu Province). (See Map 2, 17.) In Bashō's time, the location of the ancient barrier was uncertain. According to a sign at the barrier site today, in the late Edo Period, the lord of Shirakawa, Matsudaira Sadanobu (1759–1829), conducted research and determined the location of the ancient barrier. He erected a memorial at the site in 1800. The site is on a small hill on Route 76 south of Shirakawa City. Atop the hill is Shirakawa Shrine, and behind the shrine are traces of a dry moat and breastwork of the former barrier stockade that were found during twentieth-century archaeological excavations.

In "Oku's Rice-Planting Song" (a short prose piece), Bashō writes, "I walked along the ancient road [Route 76 today], then crossed the present barrier" (Barnhill 115). The "present barrier," in Bashō's time, was a checkpoint a few miles north of the ancient site, in Shirakawa town on the main road to Sendai, Route 294 today. (See "Barrier Gates and Checkpoints," 164.)

2. Bashō quotes from a poem by Taira no Kanemori (d. 990): "If I had some means, I'd like to send word to the capital that today I have passed the Shirakawa Barrier" (Sato 58, note 64). Such poems made barrier-crossing famous.

   The three northern barrier gates were the Shirakawa Barrier; the Nakoso Barrier in Mutsu Province, near its border with Hitachi Province, on the Pacific Coast; and the Nezu Barrier in Dewa Province, near its border with Echigo Province, on the Japan Sea Coast. Later in their journey, Bashō and Sora crossed the Nezu Barrier, heading south from Dewa into Echigo (33. Echigo Road).

3. In "Summer's Cuckoo" (a short prose piece), Bashō notes that the Shirakawa Barrier was known for "the deeply moving quality of spring and autumn and for viewing the moon and snow" (Barnhill 114). Crossing in summer, he imagined what the barrier scenery would look like in autumn by recalling ancient poems, like the following two (qtd. in Sato 58, note 66), which express the pathos of time passing (哀れ, awa-re) using autumn imagery:

   > Though I left the capital with spring mist rising, autumn wind blows at the Shirakawa Barrier. (Priest Nōin, 998–1050)
   >
   > Though I saw Kyōto still in green leaves, fallen crimson leaves carpet Shirakawa Barrier. (Minamoto no Yorimasa, 1106–1180)

   In the next section (12. Sukagawa), Bashō tells his host that he was physically exhausted and also overwhelmed with nostalgia when crossing the barrier, so he didn't come up with a verse, as was expected of a poet. However, in "Summer's Cuckoo," he later describes what he saw ("the greens of barley sprouts and the poor farmers toiling painstakingly") and adds the following verse: "rice fields and barley—in them, summer's hototogisu" (*ta ya mugi ya naka ni mo natsu no hototogisu*) (Barnhill 114).

4. The fourth-moon flower (卯の花, unohana, deutzia) and the wild rose (茨の花, ibara no hana) bloom on bushes. When covered with white blossoms, the bushes look as if they are trimmed with snow. (See the photos on the facing page.) Both bushes flower in Uzuki (卯月), the fourth moon of the year (May-June). Bashō and Sora were at Shirakawa on June 8 and 9 (4.20 and 4.21). The names of the

fourth moon (卯月) and the fourth-moon flower (卯の花) use the character 卯, or rabbit, the fourth sign of the Chinese Zodiac.

5. Traveling with only essential gear (see "3. Sōka"), Bashō and Sora didn't have formal attire for crossing the barrier. Adorning themselves with fourth-moon flowers added a touch of natural elegance to their austere pilgrimage garb. (On natural elegance, or fūryū [風流, lit., "wind flow"], see "12. Sukagawa," note 4.)

***Top**: Fourth-moon flowers (unohana, Deutzia) blooming at the Shirakawa Barrier in June.*
***Bottom**: Ibara (Wild Roses) at Sendai Wild Plant Garden.*

12. Sukagawa

After this and that, we crossed the barrier and continued on, fording the Abukuma River. On the left were the high peaks of Aizu; on the right, the domains of Iwaki, Sōma, and Miharu and a mountain range between Hitachi and Shimotsuke provinces.[1]

We stopped at a place called Kagenuma [Reflections Marsh], but the sky was overcast, so nothing was reflected in its water.[2]

At the post town of Sukagawa, we sought out a man named Tōkyū and stayed with him for four or five days.[3] First off, he asked about the barrier crossing. I hadn't yet reflected on it; my body and mind were fatigued from the hardships of the long road; yet my soul had been awestruck by the scenery, and my heart overwhelmed with nostalgia from recalling ancient poems.

first poetry of natural elegance: Oku's rice-planting songs[4]
風流の初やおくの田植うた / *fūryū no hajime ya oku no taueuta*

I came up with this verse for the crossing into Oku, as was expected of me. A second and a third verse followed. During our stay, we composed three sequences of linked verses.[5]

Near the edge of this post town, having grown weary of the world, a monk lived in seclusion under the shade of a huge chestnut tree. I wondered if "Mountain deep . . . gathering fallen chestnuts" was like this place.[6] I jotted down some notes:

It's said that because the kanji for "chestnut" [栗] combines the characters for "west" [西] and "tree" [木], it indicates the Western Pure Land; and that during his life, Bosatsu Gyōgi used chestnut wood for his walking-sticks as well as his house posts.[7]

its flowers unnoticed by the world, chestnut tree at the eaves[8]
世の人の見付ぬ花や軒の栗 / *yo no hito no mitsukenu hana ya noki no kuri*

Notes

1. For the location of places mentioned here, see Map 3, 35. After crossing the Abukuma River on their way to Sukagawa, Bashō and Sora spent the night of June 9 (4.21) in the post town of Yabuki, about 14 miles north of Shirakawa. The road north to Sendai and Matsushima followed the river, which flows 150 miles

through Oku from sources in the Nasu mountains and empties into the Pacific Ocean about 14 miles south of Sendai.

Abukuma River at Shirakawa, shallow enough to ford.

2. On June 10 (4.22), Bashō and Sora left Yabuki for Sukagawa, seven miles from Yabuki. They stopped at Kagenuma, just south of Sukagawa, where a legendary pond was located: a thirteenth-century lord was exiled nearby. When his wife followed, she learned that he had already been executed, so she drowned herself in a pond, "hugging a mirror to her breast. . . . Ever since that time the surface of the pond is said to reflect things like a mirror" (Kohl). The marsh is gone, but several ponds, large and small, remain in the area.

3. Tōkyū was the post station chief at Sukagawa. He once lived in Edo and was a friend of Bashō's and an accomplished poet (Kohl).

4. "Natural elegance" is a translation of "fūryū" (風流, lit., "wind flow"), an aesthetic term introduced from China during the Nara Period (710–784). The term is defined generally as excellence, taste, or refinement in poetry and art, but Chinese and Japanese writers have used the term with various meanings in different periods and for different arts (Qiu 95–97).

   Bashō interpreted "fūryū" as an aesthetic ideal achieved when a poet or painter lives in accordance with the fleeting, ever-changing flow of nature and its four seasons. In "Eulogy on the Painting of the Three Sages," Bashō writes, "A person who puts his whole heart into *fūryū* and harmonizes himself with the four seasons would find the things worthy of verse as inexhaustible as the grains of sand on the beach" (qtd. in Qiu, 97). In the second paragraph of *Notes from a Travel Pack* (*Oi no Kobumi*), Bashō affirms the artistic importance of following nature's creative flow:

   > One principle runs through all highly refined art, whether it's Saigyō's 31-syllable verses, Sōgi's linked verses, Sesshū's paintings, or Rikyū's tea ceremony; that principle is that the artists follow zōka [造化, "nature's unpredictable, never static creative force"] and make the four seasons their constant companions. Whatever they see is a flower; whatever they contemplate is the moon. When an image doesn't reveal a flower, the artist is still a barbarian; when the heart doesn't express a flower, the poet is still a bird or a beast. The artist must go beyond the barbarian and separate himself from the birds and beasts; he must follow zōka and return to zōka. [The definition of zōka is from Wilson's "Colonization of Japanese Haiku," 20.]

   Qiu explains the etymology and meaning of "zōka":

   > *Zōka* came from a Chinese word written in two characters *zao-hua*, whose literal meaning is 'create and transform.' . . . evidence indicate that Bashō and

many *haikai* poets of his time most likely learned the word from their reading of the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*. . . . To summarize briefly, [*zōka*] first refers to the natural way in which all phenomena come into being and transform. In other words, it is the working of the Way or *Dao*. Second, it suggests that the existence of all things and beings is the direct result of the workings of the *Dao*, therefore everything/being spontaneously embodies the *Dao*. Third, to follow the natural way of each thing/being is at the same time to follow the *Dao.* Bashô considered following *zōka* essential to all arts in this philosophical context. (Qtd. in Wilson, "Interview")

In the verse's opening phrase, "fūryū no hajime," Bashō suggests that the first natural elegance he heard on his journey to Oku was in its rice-planting songs, a compliment to his host Tōkyū for "inviting him to such a poetic place" (Sato 141–142, endnote 8). The verse is also interpreted as meaning that traditional rice-planting songs were the first poetry to embody fūryū. (*初*, hajime, means "first," "beginning," "origin.")

Rice farming was a part of the rustic life that Bashō idealized, as it followed the seasons in preparing paddies, planting shoots, watering, and harvesting crops. Qiu notes, "it is common knowledge among the Shōmon poets [those belonging to Bashō's haikai school] that rice planting, or the experience of encountering rice planting, is fūryū" (98). Shirane notes that rice-planting songs were part of traditional agricultural rituals that included "music, songs, and dances that functioned as a prayer for a rich harvest" (*Four Seasons* 154).

Bashō believed that the best way to live in harmony with nature was to become a Daoist wanderer or recluse; both rejected worldly pursuits and "valued rusticity, humbleness, and deliberate eccentricity and unconventionality," in a life free from materialistic and domestic constraints (Qiu 98). Bashō undertook his journey to Oku in the footsteps of the twelfth-century poet-wanderer Saigyō and praised recluses he encountered along the way.

5. Bashō's verse served as the starter of a sequence of 36 verses. Sora wrote the starter for the second sequence; Tōkyū started the third (Sato 142, endnote 8; see "Renga and Haikai," 156.)

6. Meeting the recluse living in the shade of a chestnut tree was Bashō's second encounter with fūryū in Sukagawa. (See note 4 above.) Bashō quotes from a twelfth-century verse by Saigyō: "Mountain deep, I'll collect the water dripping from rocks, for now picking fallen horse chestnuts" (*yama fukami iwa ni shitadaru mizu tomen katsugatsu ochitsuru tochi hirō hodo*). The Sukagawa monk's pen name was Rissai, Chestnut Food (Sato 60, notes 73 and 74).

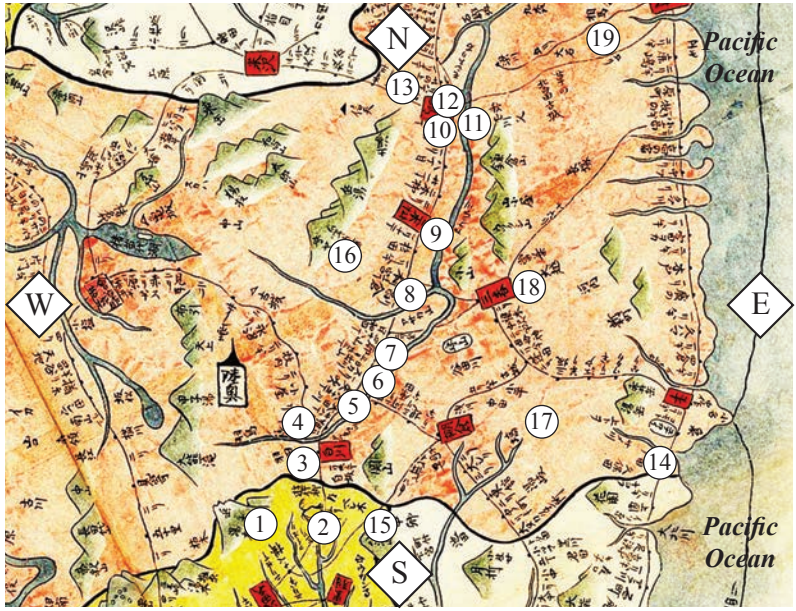
7. The Western Pure Land (西方浄土, Saihō Jōdo) is a place where Amida Buddha's faithful are reborn after death and attain enlightenment. Gyōgi (668–749) was noted for traveling around the nation, building temples and raising funds for projects that benefited the people (Sato 62, note 75). Posthumously, for his good works, he was awarded the title of Bosatsu (菩薩, Bodhisattva or Saint) by the Imperial Court.

   After his journey to Oku, Bashō emulated the Sukagawa recluse by secluding himself for five month at a retreat near Lake Biwa. (See "Bashō's Life" 152-153.)

8. In contrast to flowers like sakura and chrysanthemum, the chestnut flower, which

blooms in summer, is considered common, humble, and inconspicuous, qualities Bashō associated with fūryū. (See note 4.)

A recluse under a chestnut tree in Sukagawa. Yosa Buson (1716–1784).



3. Shirakawa Barrier to Iizuka (1830 Map). ***Shimotsuke Province***: (1) Sesshōseki, (2) Ashino. ***Mutsu Province***: (3) Shirakawa, (4) Abukuma River, (5) Yabuki, (6) Sukagawa, (7) Kōriyama, (8) Asaka Hills, (9) Nihonmatsu, (10) Fukushima, (11) Shinobu, (12) Senoue, (13) Iizuka. ***Places Mentioned in "11. Shirakawa"***: (14) Nakoso Barrier, in Mutsu near its border with Hitachi Province. ***Places Mentioned in "12. Sukagawa"***: (15) the mountains between Shimotsuke and Hitachi provinces, (16) peaks of Aizu, (17) Iwaki Domain, (18) Miharu Domain, (19) Sōma Domain.

13. Asaka Hills

We departed Tōkyū's house; about five li away, past the post town of Hiwada and close to the road were the Asaka Hills [Asakayama] and nearby were numerous marshes.[1] Because the time for cutting katsumi was approaching, we asked locals about which grass bore the katsumi flower, but no one knew.[2] We searched the marshes, asking everyone we met about katsumi, katsumi until the sun was above the mountain ridge.[3]

At Nihonmatsu, we made a right turn off the main road and went to see the rock house of Kurozuka.[4] We spent the night in Fukushima.

Notes

1. Bashō gives in distance in li, a traditional Chinese unit of measure. During the Edo Period, a li was set as equivalent to 2.44 miles (3.927 km). Asakayama was 13 miles ("about five li") from Tōkyū's house in Sukagawa.

   Between their departure from Sukagawa and their search for katsumi near Asakayama, Bashō and Sora stopped overnight in the post town of Koriyama, eight miles north of Sukagawa (Kohl). They took a roundabout route to get there, first going three miles south to see Otsuji Falls, about which Bashō composed a verse for the start of the midsummer rainy season, around the beginning of the fifth moon: "fifth-moon rains: so much water, the falls are buried!" (*samidare wa taki furiuzumu mikasa kana)*. The fifth moon (皐月, Satsuki, Moon of Rice Sprouts) is

Rice fields east of Asaka Hills below a flood-control embankment along the Abukuma River.

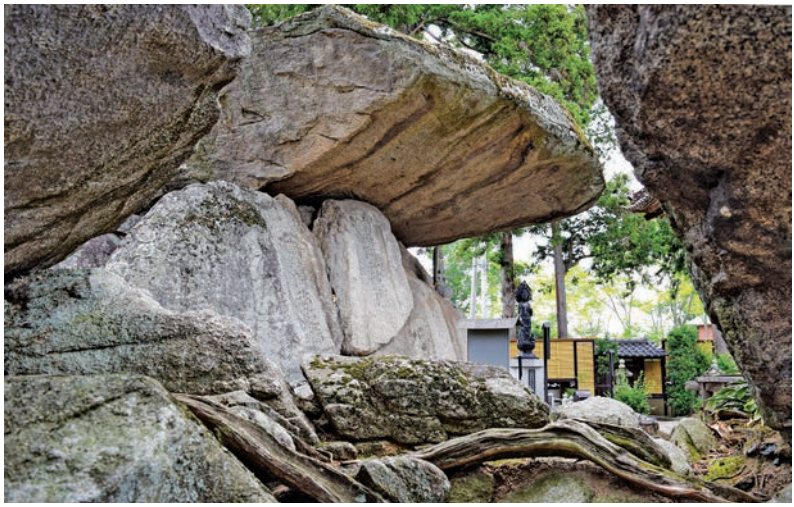
associated with both rice sprouting and sa-midare (五月雨), or fifth-moon rains. "Sa" is short for the name of the month, "Sa-tsuki"; "midare" is from "mizu-tare" or waterfall, suggesting the heavy downpours (Kohl; see "Lunar Calendar and the Four Seasons," 166.)

East of Asakayama, place names along the Abukuma River indicate marshes (numa, 沼) and swamps (sawa, 沢). Today an embankment along the river provides flood protection for rice fields that have replaced the marshes and swamps. Even in Bashō's time, Sora reports the area was mainly rice fields; still, the area was called Asaka Marsh (Asakanuma; Kohl). (See Map 3, 35.)

2. "Time for cutting katsumi": Bashō refers to the approach of the date for the Tango Festival, celebrated on 5.5, the fifth day of the fifth moon. (See "Tango Festival," 168–169.) On the eve of the festival, bundles of the sword-like leaves of ayame grass were cut and attached to the eaves of houses to ward off diseases and disasters. The twelfth-century scholar Kamo no Chōmei writes that ayame grass couldn't be found in Michinoku (Oku), so katsumi, which grew "by Lake Asaka," was substituted for it (Kato 421). Chōmei says that katsumi was also called komo or makomo, "a sort of grain plant whose dry stalks can be used for thatching roofs"; a modern dictionary glosses "katsumi" as "wild rice"; Keene translates it as "water oats."

   Bashō was curious about what katsumi looked like because it was mentioned in poems like the following from the tenth-century *Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems* (*Kokinshū*), in which the poet puns on katsumi (the plant), and katsu-mi ("half-seen"): "Shall I desire always a person I so seldom see, someone as rare as the flowering katsumi in the Asaka marshland in Michinoku?" (*Michinoku no Asaka no numa no hana-katsumi katsu miru hito ni koi ya wataran*) (Sato 62, note 77).

3. "The sun was above the mountain ridge" refers to the mid-morning sun above the eastern mountains. The Asaka Hills are five miles north of Koriyama, where



The rock house of Kurozuka at Kanze Temple in Adachigahara. (See note 4.)

Bashō and Sora spent the night. (See note 1.) They left Koriyama at daybreak, searched for katsumi that morning at Asaka Marsh just east of Asaka Hills. Then they walked to Nihonmatsu, 10 miles north of Asaka Hills; to see the rock-house of Kurozuka; and continued on to Fukushima, 11 miles beyond Nihonmatsu. (Kohl; see Map 3, 35.)

4. In Nihonmatsu, in the compound of Kanze Temple (aka Adachigahara Temple), is the rock house where an onibaba (demonic old woman) is said to have lived. The onibaba killed and ate travelers. The story is told in the nō drama *Adachigahara* also known as *Kurozuka*, attributed to Zeami (c. 1363–1443):

> On a cold autumn night, a mountain ascetic and his entourage traveling in Oku stop for lodging at a desolate, run-down cottage on the moors of Adachi (Adachigahara). The old woman inside welcomes them and demonstrates a spinning wheel for making hemp thread while lamenting her bitter karma and the transiency of life. After she leaves to gather firewood, the travelers discover a room full of foul-smelling bones and human corpses. As the travelers flee, the onibaba pursues them, enraged that her shame has been revealed. They rub their rosaries and pray to Buddha, driving her off, and she disappears with the night storm. (Summarized from *the Nō.com*)

A short walk from the temple, overlooking the Abukuma River, is Kurozuka (Black Hillock), where the onibaba is said to be buried under a lone cypress tree. Tales like *Kurozuka* and *Sesshōseki* (*Killing Stone*) are told in praise of Buddhism for the enlightenment and moral order it brought to this remote northern region, whose Ezo inhabitants were considered barbarians.

Adachigahara: the demon hag (right) and one of her victims. From a triptych by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798-1861).

14. Shinobu Village

The next morning we walked to Shinobu Village to look for the Shinobu Mojizuri Stone.[1] In a small village in the shadow of a far-off mountain, the stone lay half buried in the ground.[2] The village children came and told us its story: long ago, the stone, used to rub a pattern on its surface onto cloth, was at the top of the mountain; but people going to and from the stone trampled the young barley plants, so the villagers hated the stone and pushed it down into this valley with its face down. The story may well be true.

hands planting rice seedlings—long ago, making Shinobu cloth[3]
早苗とる手もとや昔しのぶ摺 / *sanae toru temoto ya mukashi Shinobu-zuri*

Notes

1. The Mojizuri Stone in Shinobu had scrambled patterns resembling writing on one of its surfaces. “Moji-zuri” combines “moji,” from a verb meaning “draw crooked or convoluted lines” (Sato 62, note 79), and “suri/zuri” (摺), “printing.” Cloth was spread over the stone and rubbed with grass used for dyeing to transfer the patterns to the cloth. The stone was famous because classical love poems compared the patterns that looked like scrambled writing to the uncontrollable thoughts of a lover. Bashō composed a short prose piece explaining the

Shinobu Mojizuri Stone.

connection: “It is said that in ancient times a woman’s love was transformed into this rock, resulting in unique designs on its surface. Dyeing cloth on it with wild indigo generates chaotic patterns, and so many poems associate them with love.” (“Pattern Rubbing Rock,” Barnhill 116)

2. Today, the Mojizuri Stone is located in a garden park at the foot of a mountain about 2.5 miles east of Mt. Shinobu (See the photo below for the locations of the stone and Mt. Shinobu in Fukushima City.)

3. Bashō’s verse suggests that he’s interested less in the connection between the stone’s patterns and wild thoughts of love than in the stone’s traditional use in printing its patterns on cloth. “Shinobu” written 忍 means “hare’s-foot fern”; written 偲ぶ, it means “to remember” or “to be nostalgic for.” Of the stone, Bashō wrote, “I can’t help thinking of the past, filled with longing” (“Pattern Rubbing Rock,” Barnhill 116). Here and elsewhere, Bashō’s nostalgia for the past is expressed in the word “mukashi” (昔, long ago, old days).

Places in “14. Shinobu Village” and “15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji.” (Photo from Mt. Tate [Tateyama], looking south over Fukushima City).

14. Shinobu Village: (1) Mt. Shinobu (the peak on the right in the row of mountains in the middle distance) is a symbol of Fukushima City; from ancient time, it’s been a site of worship; (2) the Mojizuri Stone is at the foot of a mountain beyond the Shinobu mountains, on the other side of the Abukuma River, which flows through Shinobu District.

15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji: (3) the post town of Senoue is to the left of Mt. Shinobu, on the near bank of the Abukuma River; (4) the rooftop of Ioji, the Sāto family temple, appears above the trees; (5) Sabano, an area in Iizaka Town is on the southeast side of Io Temple. The hill of Maruyama is half a mile west of Ioji and Sabano (outside the right edge of the photo).

15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji

We ferried across the Abukuma River at Tsukinowa and arrived at the post town of Senoue.[1] Historic traces of Satō Shōji were located at the side of a hill to the left, about a li and a half away; at Sabano, in Iizuka Village, we were told; asking for directions along the way, we looked for and found a hill called Maruyama. This was the site of Satō's fortified residence. Told that the main gate once stood at the base of the hill, we wept.[2]

The Satō family's memorial stones were at an old temple nearby.[3] Right off, recalling the two sons' wives pierced me with sadness; though women, they're remembered for their brave hearts.[4] I wiped my tears with my sleeve. The Memorial Stone That Makes Visitors Weep is not just in far-off China.[5]

We entered the temple to ask for tea. Here Yoshitsune's long sword and Benkei's travel chest are kept as treasures.[6]

travel chest and long sword, too—in the fifth moon, honor both with festive banners[7]
笈も太刀も五月にかざれ帋幟 / *oi mo tachi mo satsuki ni kasare kami-nobori*

It was the first day of the fifth moon.[8]

Notes

1. Senoue, a former post town on the road to Sendai, is three miles north of Fukushima. (See Map 3, 35.) *Photo below*: The Abukuma River near Senoue, where the ferry crossing of Tsukinowa was located.

2. Iizuka (飯塚, written 飯坂, Iizaka, on modern maps) is a hot-spring town about three miles west of Senoue. (See Map 3, 35.) Sabano is an area near Ioji, the Satō family temple. Maruyama is a hill about half a mile west of Io Temple.

   Satō's title "Shōji" (庄司) designates a governor of a domain (庄, shō). Satō Motoharu (1113–1189) was given Shinobu Domain by Fujiwara no Hidehira (1122–1187), who ruled northern Honshu five centuries before Bashō's visit. In a park on Tateyama (Mt. Tate), a half mile north of Io Temple, a memorial stone marks the site of Satō Shōji's Fort, Ōtori-jo (大鳥城, Big Bird Fort), built in 1177.

3. Io Temple was founded in 827 by Kūkai, aka Kōbō Daishi (774–835). (See "6. Nikkō," note 2, about Kūkai.)

***Top**: Ioji, the temple where the Satō family memorial stones are located.*
***Bottom**:The two wives, Wakazakura and Kaede, dressed in the armor of their husbands*. Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

4. The wives of Satō Shōji's two sons are remembered for having dressed in the armor of their dead husbands to console their grieving mother-in-law, Otowa.

   The two sons—Tsugunobu (1158–1185) and Tadanobu (1161–1186)—were sent to serve Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–1189), the commander of the Genji family in its battle for national supremacy against the Heike family during the Gempei War (1180–1185). (See "8. Kurobane," note 3.) At the battle of Yashima, Tsugunobu took an arrow for Yoshitsune and died (McCullough, *Tale* 365).

   After the war, Tadanobu fought a rearguard action to help Yoshitsune escape from Yoritomo, head of the Genji, who saw his younger brother as a rival. Later, while trying to rejoin Yoshitsune, Tadanobu was surrounded in Kyōto and committed suicide (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 206).

   Today, in the cemetery of Io Temple are two pairs of memorial stones, one pair for Satō Shōji and his wife, Otowa, and another for their two sons. In an alcove to the right of the main altar in the worship hall, Tsugunobu's wife, Wakazakura (aka Hatsune), and Tadanobu's wife, Kaede, are memorialized at an altar with two lifelike dolls dressed in samurai armor.

5. In China, The Memorial Stone That Makes Visitors Weep honors a beloved official of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) (Sato 64, note 83).

6. Yoshitsune and his retainer Benkei, a Buddhist monk, traveled to Iizuka for a memorial service for Tsugunobu and Tadanobu (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 177–179).

   Benkei's wooden travel chest (about two feet tall, two feet wide, and nine inches deep) was carried on the back. The drawers of such chests were used to store clothing, religious objects, books, and so on. Benkei's chest is displayed in the Treasure Hall at Ioji. Yoshitsune's long sword, if it exists, isn't exhibited, but the metal arrow head that Yoshitsune is said to have taken from Tsugunobu's body is on display. (See note 4.)

Benkei's Travel Chest (笈, Oi).

   Benkei, noted for his great size, strength, and bravery, was Yoshitsune's most famous retainer. While accosting passersby in Kyōto and taking their swords for his collection, Benkei encountered Yoshitsune, "a slight, elegant youth, playing a flute." Benkei demanded his sword, but the youth outdueled him with superior quickness, agility, and swordsmanship, after which Benkei became a lifelong retainer and friend. The duel, in one version of the legend, took place on Gojō Bridge (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 39–43).

7. Bashō's verse looks forward to the Boys' Day Festival, celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth moon (5.5). During the Genroku Period (1688–1704), the festivities included displays of "life-size armour-clad figures" and imitation halberds and spears"; also, "ships and scenes from the war between

the Heike and Genji"; and banners erected on poles and printed with "images of heroes or animals" (Casal 70; see the print below depicting a Boys' Day scene; also "Tango Festival," 168–169). Mulberry-paper banners (帋幟, kami-nobori) were originally battle standards printed with family crests. The intent of the displays was to encourage sons to become strong and brave, like warriors of old.

8. Bashō dates the visit to Io Temple 5.1 (June 18); the date in Sora's diary is 5.2.

Yoshitsune, balancing on a bridge railing, outdueling Benkei on Gojō Bridge in Kyōto. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

"Fifth Moon." Kitao Shigemasa (1739–1820).

Top scene: T*hree boys play at being samurai warriors; Boys' Day Festival banners on display to the right*.

Bottom scene: *With night rain falling outside, one woman (left) hangs mosquito netting; another (right) fans a smoky fire to repel the pests.*

16. Iizuka

We spent the night in Iizuka.[1] After soaking in a hot-spring bath, we looked for lodging and ended up in a dubious-looking, dilapidated house with straw mats covering a dirt floor. Without a lamp, we laid out our bedding in the shadows of the fire in the sunken hearth, then laid down to sleep.

After nightfall, thunder rumbled and rain fell incessantly; the roof above our sleeping area leaked; bitten repeatedly by fleas and mosquitoes, we couldn't sleep; moreover, my chronic ailment flared up so painfully, I almost passed out.[2] The brief night sky of summer brightened at last, and we resumed our journey. With the ill effects of the previous night lingering, I hired a horse, and we set out for the post town of Kōri.[3]

Despite the precariousness of my health, I embraced the long road ahead; a pilgrimage to remote places requires renouncing the body and resigning the self to transiency, even dying on the road, if that were heaven's will. With these thoughts, my energy returned somewhat, and I stepped with lighter feet along the road. We passed by Ōkido, in Date.[4]

Notes

1. Iizuka (飯塚, written 飯坂, Iizaka, on modern maps) is a hot-spring town five miles northwest of Fukushima. (See Map 3, 35.)

2. Mosquitoes multiply during the midsummer rainy season. (See the bottom scene

Sora tending to Bashō at Iizuka. Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

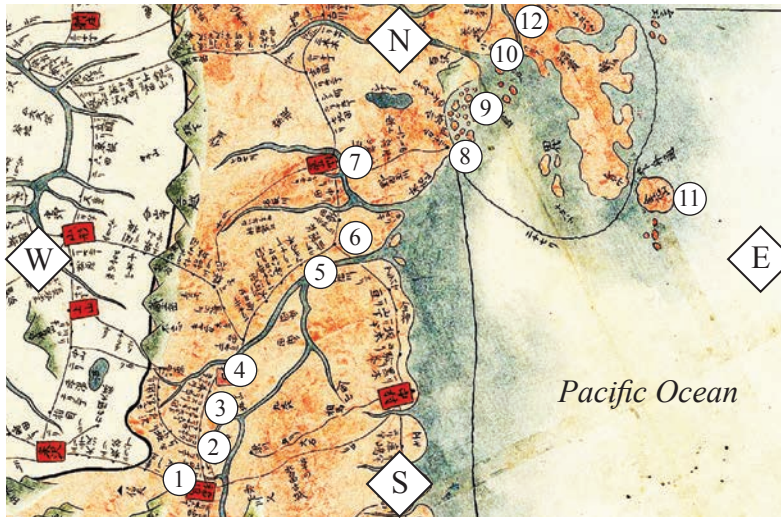
in “Fifth Month,” on p. 44, depicting women hanging mosquito netting and fanning a smoky fire to repel mosquitoes.)

Bashō’s “chronic ailment” may have been chololithiasis (gallstones), “which can cause a great deal of pain when the body is not kept warm” (Sato 66, note 86).

3. Kōri, about four miles north of Iizuka, was a post town on the road to Sendai. (See Map 4, 46.)

4. North of Kōri, Ōkido (“Great Wooden Door”) was at the entrance to the Date Domain, which was awarded to the Date Clan in 1189 for its service to Minamoto no Yoritomo during the Gempei War.

Four hundred years later, in 1599, Date Masamune (1567–1636) was granted the larger Sendai Domain (Miyagi Prefecture) for supporting Tokugawa Ieyasu in unifying the nation. Masamune ruled from Aoba Castle in the town of Sendai. In upcoming sections (“21. Sue no Matsuyama,” “22. Illustrious Deities of Shiogama,” and “23. Matsushima”), Bashō praises Masamune and his son Tadamune (1600–1658) for building and renovating temples and shrines.



Map 4. Mutsu Province, Fukushima to Ishinomaki (1830): (1) Fukushima and Iizuka, (2) Kōri, (3) Ōkido, Date, and Abumizuri Pass, (4) Shiroishi, (5) Abukuma River, (6)Iwanuma and Takekuma, (7) Sendai, (8) Shiogama, (9) Matsushima, (10) Ishinomaki, (11) Mt. Kinka, (12) Kitakami River.

17. Kasajima

After traveling beyond Abumizuri Pass and Shiroishi Castle,[1] we entered the Kasajima district and asked someone where we could find Middle Commander Fujiwara no Sanekata's grave.[2] He replied, "It's in the village you see far off to the right, at the foot of the mountain; the place is called Minowa-Kasajima. The Dōsojin Shrine and the keepsake susuki grass are also there."[3]

The roads were in such poor condition from the recent summer rains, and we were so exhausted, we only looked at the village from a distance, without going there; the names Minowa [Straw-Raincoat Ring] and Kasajima [Rain-Hat Island] fit the season.[4]

where is Kasajima on the fifth-moon's muddy roads?
笠嶋はいづこさ月のぬかり道 / *kasajima wa izuko satsuki no nukarimichi*

We found lodging in Iwanuma.[5]

Notes

1. Abumizuri is a mountain pass between Kōri and Shiroishi. (See Map 4, 46.). Shiroishi Castle, located in the post town of Shiroishi, belonged to the Katakura clan, retainers of the Date clan, which ruled Sendai Domain.

2. An aristocrat and poet of the Heian Period, Fujiwara no Sanekata (958?–998) was sent to govern Mutsu Province, serving for three years until his death. His court rank was chūjō, 中将, Middle Commander. Legend has it that he died from falling off his horse after he failed to dismount out of respect as he rode past a shrine to Dōsojin (Road Guardian Gods; see "1. Before Departure," note 5.)

   Sanekata's gravesite is in Medeshima-Kasajima, Natori City. Kasajima Dōsojin Shrine is half a mile south of the gravesite. (See "Close-up of Map 5," 50.)

3. Bashō's informant alludes to the legend of Sanekata's death (see note 2 above) and a poem by Saigyō (1118–1190) about Sanekata: "Only his name remains without decay; I regard the susuki grass in this withered field as his keepsake" (Sato 68, note 93).

4. It was the season of the midsummer rains known as samidare, fifth-moon rains. (See "13. Asaka Hills," note 1.)

   In a short prose piece, Bashō expresses disappointment about not visiting Sanekata's grave: "We were told that the grave of Middle Captain Sanekata was in a place called Kasa[j]ima . . . in the Natori region of Michinoku. . . . I have longed to visit this place, but the summer rains had been pouring down and the roads were

in terrible shape, so we had no choice but to pass on without seeing it" (Barnhill 117).

5. Sora records that on June 20 (5.3), he and Bashō stayed overnight in the post town of Shiroishi, 12 miles north of Kōri. The next day, they went to Sendai, without an overnight stay in Iwanuma. They saw the Takekuma pine (described in the next section) as they passed through Iwanuma, then continue past Kasajima on the way to Sendai (Kohl). The distance from Shiroishi to Sendai is 28 miles, representing one of the longest legs of the journey.

***Top**: Abumizuri Pass on the old road parallel to Route 4 (looking back toward Iizaka).* ***Bottom**: Sanekata's Grave, off Route39, in Medeshima-Kasajima.*

18. Takekuma

The pine of Takekuma was truly astonishing. Its roots divided into two trunks from the ground up, and it has never lost this ancient shape.[1] Right away I recalled Priest Nōin: long ago, a man sent from the capital to govern Mutsu cut down the pine and used its trunks as pilings for a bridge over the Natori River; so perhaps that's why Nōin composed a verse lamenting, "now, no trace of the pine remains."[2] But we were told that time and again, whenever the pine was cut down, a successor was planted, and it retained the thousand-year-old form of the parent—certainly a sign it's an auspicious tree.[3]

A man named Kyohaku gave me this verse as a farewell gift:

late-blooming sakura, please show my master Takekuma's pine[4]
武隈の松みせ申せ遅桜 / *takekuma no matsu mise mōse oso-zakura*

[In response, I wrote,]

from sakura blossoms to the pine with two trunks, three moons passing[5]
桜より松は二木を三月越シ / *sakura yori matsu wa futaki o mitsuki goshi*

Notes

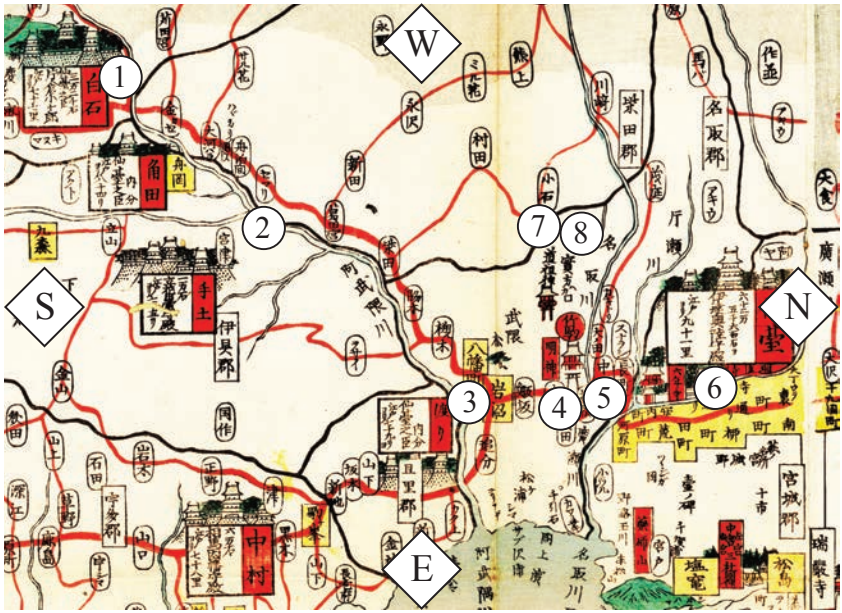
1. The pine of Takekuma (武隈, written 竹駒, Takekoma, on modern maps) was in the post town of Iwanuma. (See Map 5, 50.)

2. Priest Nōin (998–1050) visited Mutsu Province 700 years before Bashō. Earlier, in "11. Shirakawa" (see note 3), Bashō alludes to Nōin's poem about crossing the Shirakawa Barrier. Here, Bashō quotes from another poem by him, in which Nōin laments the loss of the pine that he saw on his previous visit: "have a thousand years passed?" (Barnhill 160, note 55).

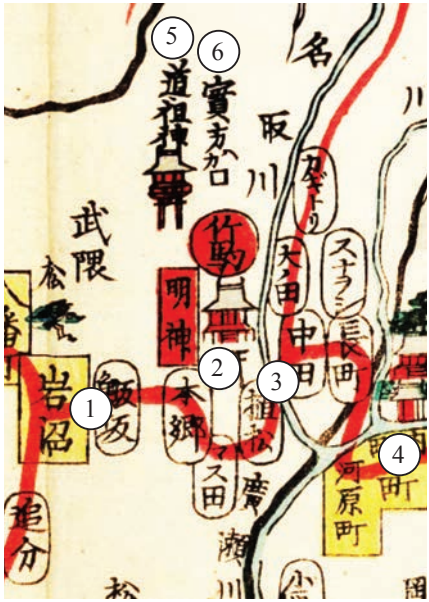
3. Pines can be propagated with seedlings or cuttings from a parent tree. A two-trunked pine grows today at Futagi [Two-Trunk] Pine Tree Historic Park near Takekoma Shrine. (See the photo on p. 50.)

4. Kyohaku (d. 1696) was a merchant and a student of Bashō's. Since Bashō would be arriving in Takekuma in summer, his student asks the late-blooming (summer) sakura (遅桜, oso-sakura). Kyohaku, who was born in the north country, hoped the auspicious pine would help his master have a safe, successful journey.

5. Sakura in Edo normally bloom toward the end of spring, in the third moon; Bashō arrived in Iwanuma at the beginning of Satsuki, the fifth moon, which was the third moon since he saw sakura bloom in Edo.



5. Mutsu Province, Shiroishi to Sendai (1850 Map): (1) Shiroishi, (2) Abukuma River, (3) Iwanuma, (4) Takekoma Shrine, (5) Natori River, (6) Sendai, (7) Dōsojin Shrine, (8) Sanekata's Grave.



Close-up of Map 5: (1) Iwanuma, (2) Takekoma Shrine, (3) Natori River, (4) Sendai, (5) Dōsojin Shrine, (6) Sanekata's Grave.

A pine with two trunks at Futagi Pine Tree Historic Park in Iwanuma.

19. Sendai

On the day when ayame grass is attached to the eaves of houses, we crossed the Natori River and entered Sendai.[1] We found lodging and stayed four or five days.

An artist named Kaemon lived here. I heard he was a man with a bit of heart, so I went to meet him. For some years, he'd been researching the whereabouts of famous places whose locations had become uncertain; he served as our guide for a day.

At Miyagino, hagi bushes grew thick; I imagined how the scene would look in autumn hues; at Tamada, Yokono, and Tsutsuji-ga-oka, asebi was in season.[2] We entered a pine forest so dense, no sunlight came through; the area was called Kinoshita [Under Trees]. As in ancient times, the dew was profuse; a poet once wrote, "Servant, tell your lord to bring an umbrella."[3]

We went to worship at Yakushi Hall, Tenjin Shrine, and other places until it got dark.[4]

Before seeing us off, Kaemon gave us an ink-and-brush sketch he had made showing the locations of poetic places around Matsushima and Shiogama. Moreover, he presented us with farewell gifts—two pairs of straw sandals with the cords dyed dark blue. Just as I had come to expect, here was someone who truly embodied a fool of fūryū [natural elegance].[5]

ayame grass—let's bind it to the sandal cords over our feet[6]
あやめ艸足に結ん草鞋の緒 / *ayamegusa ashi ni musuban waraji no o*

Notes

1. Bashō and Sora arrived in Sendai on July 1 (5.4), the eve of the Tango Festival, also known as the Ayame Festival (and Boys' Day), when bunches of pointed leaves of ayame grass (ayame-gusa, *Acorus calamus,* sweet flag) are attached to the eaves of houses to ward off malevolent spirits and diseases associated with the midsummer rains. Used medicinally, the strongly scented ayame grass was also placed in bathwater to ensure good health. The festival, celebrated on 5.5, was the third of the five annual festivals of the Edo Period. (On this festival, see "13. Asaka Hills," note 2; see also "Tango Festival," 168–169.)

2. Miyagino and Tsutsuji-ga-oka are two miles east of Sendai Castle, near Sendai Station today. Hagi (bush clover, one variety named Miyagino) is a bush that blooms around September, with small white, pink, or purple flowers on long, drooping branches. As hagi wasn't in bloom yet, Bashō imagined what Miyagino would look like when hagi was in bloom in autumn, just as earlier he

had imagined what Shirakawa might look in autumn with crimson leaves (11. Shirakawa Barrier). Asebi is a shrub with drooping stems from which small bell-shaped flowers hang.

3. Kinoshita is a district a mile south of Miyagino and Tsutsuji-ga-oka. The poem Bashō quotes is from the tenth-century *Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems* (*Kokinshū*): "Servant, tell your lord to bring an umbrella, for the dew at Miyagino is worse than rain" (Sato 72, note 106).

4. The worship hall of Yakushi, the buddha of medicine and healing, is on the east

***Top**: Natori River, on the south side of Sendai City.*
***Bottom**: A hagi bush in summer.*

Yakushi Worship Hall, Sendai.

side of Kinoshita. Tenjin Shrine, dedicated to the deified spirit of Michizane Sugawara (845–903), worshiped as a patron of scholars, is near Tsutsuji-ga-oka.

5. "Fool of fūryū" (風流のしれもの, fūryū no shiremono) is praise for Kaemon's artistic sensibility. Kaemon was both an artist and a poet (Kohl). Bashō saw in him an eccentric like himself, devoted to a life of fūryū (natural elegance, lit. "wind flow"). (See "12. Sukagawa," note 4, on Bashō's interpretation of "fūryū.") Bashō sometimes regretted being such a fool, lamenting after his journey to Oku, "I've worn out my body in journeys that are as aimless as the winds and clouds, and expended my feelings on flowers and birds." (See "Bashō's Life," 153.)

   Kaemon's gift of straw sandals (waraji) was practical—sandals wore out and had to be replaced—but it was also poetic: metonymically, feet stand for the travelers, and the sandals are a form of protection on the muddy roads of this corrupt and impure world. The dark-blue cords suggest the iris flower (*Iris sanguinea*), or ayame. Like ayame grass (*Acorus calamus)*, iris grass has sword-like leaves, so if ayame grass wasn't available for the Tango Festival, iris leaves might be substituted to ward off evil spirits. (See note 1 above.) Thus the iris-blue cords on the sandals

Worn-out straw sandals (waraji) of pilgrims, hung by their cords on a temple fence.

function as a season-word in a poem, indicating the beginning of midsummer (fifth moon).

In *Notes from a Travel Pack* (*Oi no Kobumi*), Bashō writes "one of the pleasures of the road" is meeting artists and poets like Kaemon who shared with him a devotion to natural elegance:

> When I meet a person with even a little artistic refinement [風雅, fūga] my joy is boundless. He may be someone old-fashioned, stubborn, or offensive enough to be avoided at home, but he can become a companion to converse with on a far road, and when this is the case, I feel as if I've found something of value in the creeping vines, picked up a jewel from rubble, or extracted gold from mud, so I want to note the experience and relate it to friends as one of the rewards of a journey.

6. Living on the road in sandals rather than in a house, Bashō and Sora didn't have eaves on which to attach ayame grass (see note 1 above), so they tied it on their sandal cords over their feet "as a prayer for safety on the road" (Shirane, *Traces* 246; Kohl).

***Left**: Ayame grass or Sweet flag* (Acorus calamus). Wikimedia Commons.
***Right**: Iris grass in bloom* (Iris sanguinea), *also called ayame.*

20. Tsubo Stone Monument

Guided by the pictorial map from Kaemon, we continued our journey. On a narrow road of Oku, at the foot of a hill, we saw the Sedges of Tofu.[1] Even today, it's said, these sedges are sought after every year for making mats presented to the provincial lord.

Tsubo Stone Monument is located at former site of Taga Fort in Ichikawa Village. The monument is over six feet high and about three feet wide. We dug into the moss and read the faint inscription, which gives distances to provinces and countries in the four directions. Also inscribed were dates:

> This [fort] was built in the first year of Jinki [724] by Ōno asomi Azumabito, Inspector and Governor General, and repaired in the sixth year of Tempyō-hōji [762] by Emi no asomi Asakari, Councillor, Commanding General of the Eastern Sea and the Eastern Mountain districts, and Governor General. First day of the twelfth moon.[2]

The founding was during the reign of Emperor Shōmu [724–729].

From long ago, many place names have been preserved in poetry and passed down to us; but hillsides slide into rivers and are swept away; roads are rebuilt, and stones vanish, buried beneath earth; old trees wither, replaced by saplings; times change, generations diverge, and traces of the past are lost in uncertainty. Here, however, at a stone memorial undoubtedly a thousand years old, the ancients stood before my eyes, and I peered into their hearts. This is one of the rewards of a pilgrimage, one of the joys of being alive; forgetting the drudgery of the road, I simply wept.[3]

Notes

1. On the way to the site of Taga Fort (Tagajō), six miles northeast of Sendai, Bashō and Sora walked along "a narrow road of Oku" (おくの細道, oku no hosomichi). (See Map 6, 57.) Bashō uses the phrase as the title of his narrative.

   Sedges of Tofu was designated as a poetic place by Date Tsunamura (1659–1719), lord of Sendai when Bashō visited (Sato 72, note 112). Tsunamura wanted to "reestablish or create poetic places in Sendai—apparently to promote the tourist industry" in his domain (Sato 70, note 101).

2. Tsubo (壷) is a pot or vase, but the word may be a place name where the stone was once located (Keene 183, note 25). The translation of the inscription is quoted from Keene (71).

Today, the Tsubo Stone Monument is housed in a wooden shelter just south of the site of Taga Fort, which was built in 724 to bring the northern region inhabited by Ezo clans under the control of the Imperial Court. Ōno asomi Azumabito and Emi no asomi Asakari were two generals sent to pacify the region (Barnhill 161, note 61).

Sato provides details of the "distances to provinces and countries in the four directions" inscribed on the stone:

> The "nations" here included Pohai, the short-lived country northeast of Korea, facing the Japan Sea. It came into being in 713 and was destroyed in 926. This part of the inscription reads: "1,500 li from Kyōto, 120 li from Ezo, 412 li from Hitachi Province [Ibaraki Prefecture], 274 li from Shimotsuke Province [Tochigi Prefecture], and 3,000 li from Pohai." (74, note 117; a li is equivalent to 2.44 miles.)

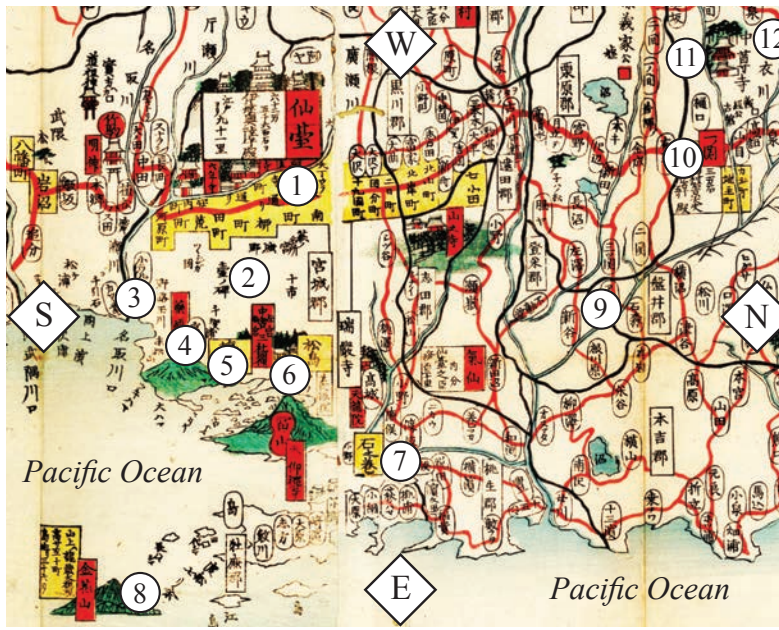
3. After searching uncertainly for traces of poetic places that had vanished, Bashō was certain he was now in the presence of the ancients at the Tsubo Stone Monument. However, according to Sato, based on a historical document and analysis of the calligraphy and contents of the monument's inscription, the stone's authenticity has been questioned (143, endnote 10). Although some believe Tsunamura excavated the stone in the 1660s at the site of Taga Fort,

Tsubo Stone Monument.

others think Tsunamura fabricated the monument. One theory suggests that the original stone was located in a village farther north, in Aomori (Kohl).

Like Sedges of Tofu, Tsubo Stone Monument was designated a poetic place by Date Tsunamura. (See note 1 above.)

Reconstructed foundation of the main hall at Taga Fort.



6. Mutsu Province, Sendai to Hiraizumi (1850 Map): (1) Sendai, (2) Tsubo Stone Monument, (3) Noda-Tamagawa, (4) Sue no Matsuyama, (5) Shiogama, (6) Matsushima, (7) Ishinomaki, (8) Mt. Kinka, (9) Toima (Tome), (10) Ichinoseki, (11) Hiraizumi, (12) Koromo River.

21. Sue no Matsuyama

From Taga Fort, we went to look for Oki-no-Ishi [Offshore Stone] in Noda-Tamagawa.[1]

At Sue no Matsuyama [Top of Pine Hill] a temple called Masshōzan was built. The grounds around the pines were crowded with graves. When I reflected on how pledges of love like "wings abreast" and "branches intertwined" all end with death, my heart was overwhelmed with sadness.[2]

From the inlet at Shiogama, an evening temple bell tolled.

The sky of summer rains cleared a little; under a faint evening moon, Magaki Island lay close to shore.[3] Hearing the voices of fishermen dividing their catch as they rowed their small boat up to the pier, I understood the heart of the poet who wrote, "the mooring ropes are truly sad"; recalling his words, I felt even more deeply the pathos of time passing.[4]

That night, a blind monk plucked his biwa and recited a dramatic tale, Oku-style; it was unlike the recitation style of *Heike* or ballad-dance.[5] When his rustic performance peaked close to my pillow, it was ear-splitting. Still, it was praiseworthy that the traditional recitation style of this remote region hadn't been forgotten.

Notes

1. Bashō's reference to Oki-no-Ishi ("Offshore Stone") sets up the theme of sorrows of love for this passage. Oki-no-Ishi is a poetic place from a verse in the twelfth-century *Collection of 1,000 Years* (*Senzaishū*). The poet compares the sleeves of a lover, always wet from weeping, to an offshore stone unseen and wet even at low tide (Kohl).

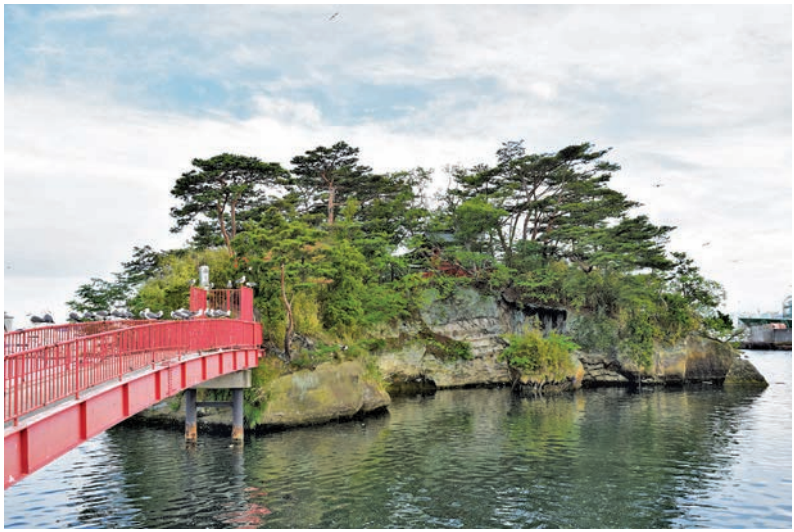
   The poem doesn't identify a particular offshore stone, but Date Tsunamura (1659–1719), the lord who designated Sedges of Tofu and Tsubo Stone Monument as poetic places, also designated a stone in a pond in Noda-Tamagawa as Oki-no-Ishi (Sato 74, note 127). The stone and pond (surrounded by houses in a residential district today) are about 100 yards from Sue no Matsuyama. (See Map. 6, 57.)

   Noda-Tamagawa, once a tidewater basin, was a moon-viewing spot and poetic place from classical poetry. The eleventh-century poet Nōin, whose poetry Bashō refers to in "12. Shirakawa" and "18. Takekuma," wrote, "When evening falls, the salty breeze blows across Noda-Tamagawa in Michinoku, plovers crying" (Kohl).

2. Sue no Matsuyama (末の松山, Top of Pine Hill) was associated with pledges of everlasting love—"as long as this hill stands above the waves" (Kohl). The name of the temple, Masshōzan (末松山), is the sinicized reading of the characters in Sue no Matsuyama. The temple was built by Date Masamune (1567–1636).

"Wings abreast," "branches intertwined": Bashō quotes from "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," a long narrative poem by Chinese poet Bai Juyi (772–846) about the tragic love of an emperor and his consort. The poem contains two famous metaphors for the lovers: two birds flying together, wings abreast; and two trees with interwoven branches. (The metaphors are also interpreted as two birds with one wing and two trees joined by one branch.) The poem concludes that heaven and earth (and love) will end, but the sorrow of love is everlasting.

3. Magaki Island is a poetic place from a verse in the tenth-century *Collection of*



***Top**: Gravestones and pines at Sue no Matsuyama.*
***Bottom**: Pine-covered Magaki Island in Shiogama harbor, today close to shore and connected to land by a foot bridge. A shrine is hidden among the pines.*

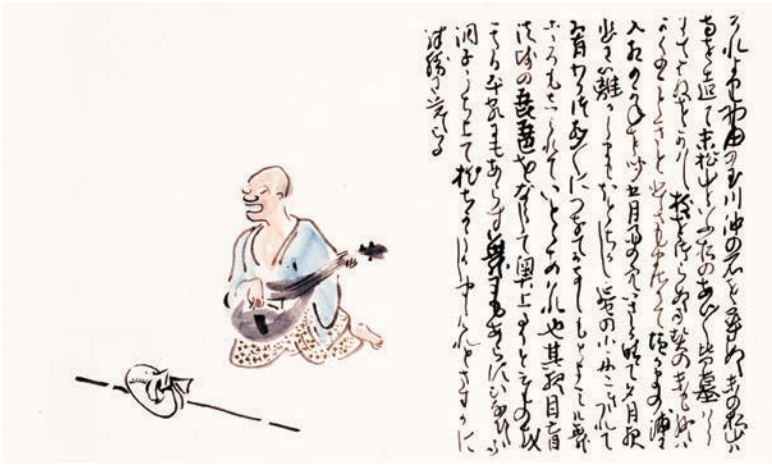
Ancient and Modern Poems (*Kokinshū*); the verse puns on "matsu," which means both "to wait" and "pine trees." The island, covered with pines, is the setting where a female poet waits for / "pines" for her departed loved one: "when my beloved / is in the far capital— / on Magaki Isle / in Shiogama I wait / pining 'neath the evergreens" (Trans. by L.R. Rodd.).

4. Bashō quotes from a verse in *Kokinshū* placed just before the verse about Magaki Island quoted in note 3 above: "In Michinoku, every place has its charms, but at Shiogama Inlet, the mooring ropes on row boats are truly sad" (*michinoku wa izuku wa aredo shiogama no ura kogu fune no tsunade kanashi mo*). The mooring ropes suggest the tenuous, transient connection of fishermen to land and, metaphorically, to this life; and also the tenuous connections of lovers to each other, as in the verse about Magaki Island.

5. The biwa-plucking blind minstrel is performing oku-jōruri (奥上るり), a dramatic recitation in a style unique to Oku. *Heike* refers to the recitation style of *The Tale of the Heike*, a collaboratively-composed fourteenth-century epic recounting the Gempei War, a conflict between the Genji (Minamoto family) and Heike (Taira family). (See "8. Kurobane," note 3.) Blind Buddhist minstrels who performed the tale were known as biwa hōshi (lute priest). The biwa, or lute, was used to convey moods and create dramatic effects.

   Ballad-dance refers to ballad performances recounting episodes of the Gempei War and other samurai tales and featuring recitation (including singing and chanting), dance, and music. The art was known as kōwaka, kōwaka-mai, or simply mai (舞, dance). Toward the end of the sixteenth century, kōwaka-mai rivaled nō drama as a performing art, but by Bashō's Genroku Era (1688–1704), "people could only hazily recall that kōwaka was the name of an obscure dance form of the past" (Araki 5).

   The references to recitations of historical narratives anticipate upcoming sections ("22. Illustrious Deities of Shiogama" and "25. Hiraizumi"), in which shades of warriors from old narratives appear to Bashō and Sora.



Blind minstrel plucking a biwa and narrating oku-jōruri. Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

22. Illustrious Deities of Shiogama

Early the next morning, we paid homage to the illustrious deities of Shiogama.[1] The shrine had been restored by the provincial lord, with stately posts, brightly painted rafters, and a grand stone stairway. The morning sun lit up the vermilion fence. Venerable is our nation's custom that the divine spirits be so brilliantly manifested even at the far end of this road, the very border of this impure world.[2]

In front of the shrine was an old treasured lantern, the metal surface of its door engraved with these words: "Third year of Bunji [1187], Izumi no Saburō, donation." Curious how a shade from five hundred years ago floated up before my eyes. Izumi was a courageous, just, loyal, and filial samurai. His good name has endured till now, and he's beloved by all. "Truly, a person should serve the Way and defend honor; his reputation will follow accordingly."[3]

It was already near noon when we hired a boat to take us to Matsushima, over two li away[4]; we arrived at Ojima Beach.

Notes

1. The most important shrine in Oku, Shiogama is dedicated to three illustrious deities (明神, myōjin): Shiotsuchi-Oji-no-Kami, who taught the people how to make salt by boiling seawater in cauldrons ("Shiogama" means "Salt-cauldron"); and Takemikazuchi-no-Kami and Futsunushi-no-Kami, two deities sent by the sun goddess Amaterasu to pacify and develop the Oku region. (See Map 6, 57, for the shrine's location.)

2. Bashō praises the custom of rebuilding and restoring shrines to venerate the divine spirits, revitalize and increase their efficacy, and ensure that the deities will remain forever young (tokowaka). Shiogama Shrine was revived in 1607 by Date Masamune (1567–1636), lord of Sendai. The founding date of the shrine is unknown, but it served as a shrine to Taga Fort (see "20. Tsubo Stone Monument"); records compiled in 820 indicate that the shrine was exempt from imperial taxes.

   "The far end of this road": The Sendai Road started at the Shirakawa Barrier and ended at Sendai, the capital of Sendai Domain; from Sendai, the Nambu Road continued north to Morioka, the capital of Nambu Domain. Bashō took a side road northeast from Sendai to visit the Sedges of Tofu, Tsubo Stone Monument, Oki-no-Ishi, Sue no Matsuyama, and Shiogama Shrine. (See Map 4, 46 and Map 6, 57.)

   "Border of the impure world": in this remote region, Bashō felt as if he were walking at the border between the lands of the living and the dead. Earlier, at the Tsubo Stone Monument, he felt as if he were peering into the hearts of the ancients. Here at Shiogama Shrine, the shade of Izumi no Saburō appears to him; later at

Hiraizumi and Tada Shrine, he sees the shades of other ancient warriors.

3. Izumi no Saburō was the name given to Fujiwara no Tadahira (1167–1189) when he was initiated into manhood. Tadahira was the third son (Saburō) of Fujiwara no Hidehara (1122–1188), who ruled northern Honshu from the town of Hiraizumi.

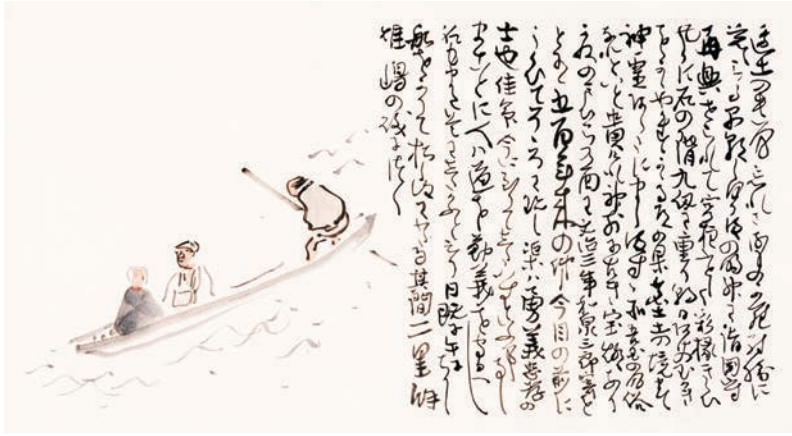
The story of Izumi is part of the legend of the Genji commander Minamoto no Yoshitsune, whom Bashō alluded to in "15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji." (See notes 4 and 6.) In 1187, having lost favor with his older brother Yoritomo, Yoshitsune took refuge in Hiraizumi under Fujiwara no Hidehira's protection. Before dying, Hidehira called his five sons before him and had them swear oaths to serve and protect Yoshitsune (Araki 180–181). However, after Hidehira's death in 1188, only Izumi kept his oath to his father and remained loyal to and died defending Yoshitsune. Izumi's reputation for filial piety, loyalty, and courage has

The grand stairway to the front gate of Shiogama Shrine.

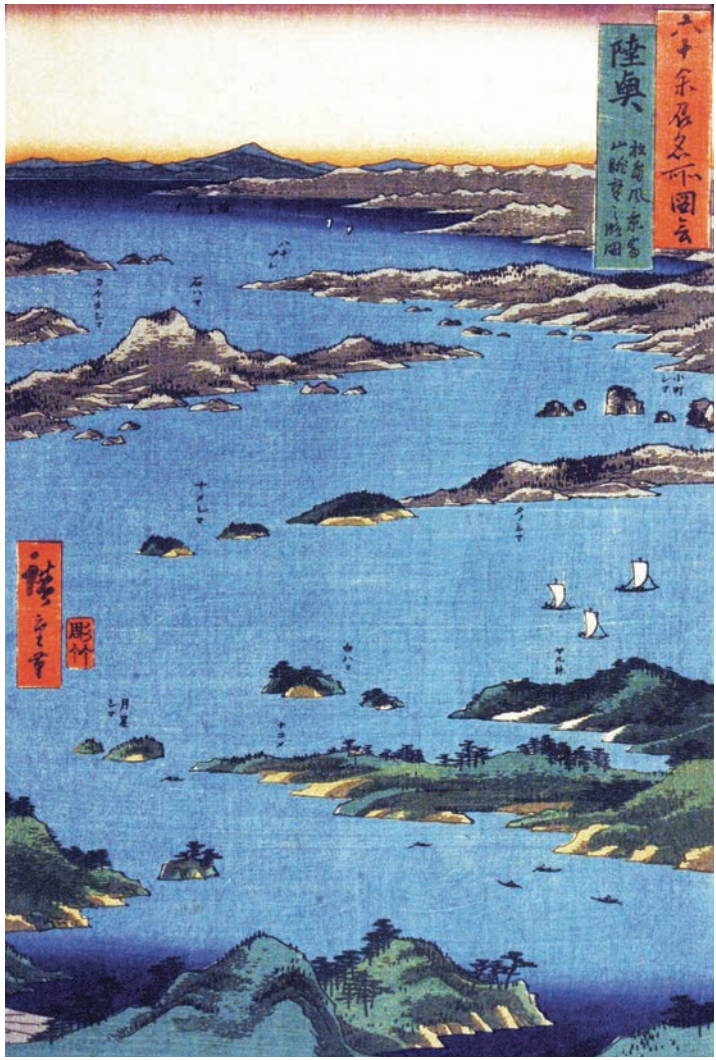
endured through the centuries.

Bashō quotes from the writing of Confucian scholar Han Yu (768–824) about the relationship between a man's actions and his reputation (Keene 183, note 29). The Way (道, dō) in "serve the Way faithfully" refers to religious teachings, here Confucian ethics, in which courage, justice, loyalty, and filial piety are fundamental virtues. These virtues were adopted by the samurai code of chivalry, later known as Bushidō (武士道, "Way of the Warrior").

4. Matsushima is about four miles north of Shiogama. (See Map 4, 46).



***Top**: The metal lantern donated to Shiogama Shrine by Izumi no Saburō in 1187.*
***Bottom**: "We hired a boat to get to Matsushima."* Yosa Buson (1716–1784).



"View of Matsushima (Mutsu Province): Sketch Map with a View of Mount Tomi." Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

23. Matsushima

It's often been said, but Matsushima [Pine Islands] is the most beloved scene in our land, not in the least inferior to Lake Dongting or Lake Xi in China. At high tide, from the southeast, the sea floods into the three-li wide bay, as into the estuary of the Zhe River.[1]

The bay has countless islands, some rising sharply, pointing toward heaven, others low, hiding among the waves; some are double layered, others triple layered, stacked like mats; to the left, an island alone; to the right, a line of islands; some carry rocks on their backs or embrace small islands in their arms, like beloved children and grandchildren. The dense green pines are bent by the sea winds, their needled boughs curved, as if artfully trained.

The scenery has a deep, far-off look, like the face of a beautiful woman made up.[2] Perhaps long ago, in the age of the creation gods, Matsushima was made by the mountain god, Ōyamazumi.[3] Anyone with a writing brush trying to describe this divine work of nature would run out of words.[4]

From the beach, Ojima juts out into the sea, island-like, and on it were traces of Zen Master Ungo's secluded chamber, his rock for sitting in meditation, and so on.[5] In the shade of pines, a scattering of world-weary recluses lived undisturbed in thatched retreats, fires of gleanings and pine cones smoldering. I didn't know who they were, but I stopped by yearning to join them; meanwhile, the moon reflected on the sea transfigured the daytime view.

We returned to shore and found lodging. On the second floor, with the window open, I settled in for the night; immersed in the wind and clouds, I felt mysteriously enchanted. Sora wrote:

Matsushima: cuckoo, borrow a crane's body[6]
松嶋や鶴に身をかれほとゝぎす / *matsushima ya tsuru ni mi o kare hototogisu*

I gave up trying to find words to express my thoughts and lay down, but couldn't sleep.[7] When I parted from Sodō at my former retreat in Edo, he presented me with a kanshi [poem in Chinese] on Matsushima. I also had Anteki's 31-syllable verse on Matsugaura Island. I untied my pouch and made these verses my companions for the night, along with 17-syllable verses by Sampū and Jokushi.

On the eleventh day of the fifth moon, we worshiped at Zuigan Temple. Makabe no Heishirō entered the priesthood and went to study in China 32 generations before the present abbot. After returning, he founded this temple. Later, with the virtuous reforms of Zen Master Ungo, the seven halls and roof

tiles were restored, and the golden interiors and altar adornments now shine brightly—a grand temple, an embodiment of Buddha's Pure Land.[8]

I wondered where the temple of that holy man Kembutsu might be.[9]

Notes

1. The bay of Matsushima is about seven miles wide. After traveling around Japan, Confucian scholar Shunsai Hayashi (1618–1688) praised the bay as one of Japan's three most scenic spots. Lake Dongting and Lake Xi in China are famous for their beauty. The estuary of the Zhe River (Qiantang River) is noted for the onrush of its tidal bore (Sato 78).

2. "Like the face of a beautiful woman made up": Bashō alludes to a poem by Su Shi (1037–1101) praising the beauty of Lake Xi (西湖, West Lake). In "Drinking by the Lake: First, under a Clear Sky, Then in Rain," Su compares the lake's beauty, in clear weather or rain, to the legendary fifth-century beauty Xi Shi (西施, Jpnse: Seishi): "If I compared Lake Xi to Xi Shi, it would be like her in all aspects, made up lightly or heavily" (Sato 80, note 147).

3. Bashō's phrase "chihayaburu kami no mukashi" (ちはや振神のむかし) has been variously translated: "in the days of rock-smashing deities" (Sato); "in the ancient age of the mighty gods" (McCullough); "in the age of the gods" (Shirane). "Chihayaburu" ("rock-smashing," "mighty") modifying "kami" (gods) has also been glossed "strong," "swift," and "awesome." Bashō refers to the distant past ("mukashi") when heaven and earth were created by the gods, as described in *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) and *Nihongi* (*Chronicles of Japan*), the nation's earliest historical records, compiled in the eighth century.

   The opening section of *Kojiki*, "The Beginning of Heaven and Earth," lists the generations of deities who came into being in the Plain of High Heaven, at first

Ojima Beach, where Bashō and Sora disembarked at Matsushima.

singly, then in brother-sister pairs. The fifth pair, Izanagi and Izanami, stirred the sea below with a jeweled spear, and the brine dripping from the spear tip coagulated into an island. The pair descended to the island and procreated the Great Eight-Island Country (大八州国, Ō-yashima-kuni), known later as Yamato or Nihon (Japan). The couple's progeny also include other deities assigned to oversee various elements of nature, including the sun goddess Amaterasu (Heavenly Shining) and Ōyamazumi (Great Deity of Mountains).

4. "Nature" is a translation of "zōka" (造化, create + transform), which Wilson defines as "nature's unpredictable, never static creative force." ("Colonization" 20; see "12. Sukagawa," note 4.) In *Notes from a Travel Pack* (*Oi no Kobumi*), Bashō writes about his journeys, "Contemplating the creations of zōka in the beautiful scenery of mountains, fields, seas, and shores or yearning after the traces of wanderers who relied on nothing but nature, I tried to fathom the truth expressed by poets and artists."

5. Ungo (1582–1659), a Zen Master (禅師, Zenji) from Tosa Province in Shikoku, was the teacher of Bashō's teacher Butchō. (See "9. Ungan Temple," note 1.) Zen Buddhists practice meditation in seclusion as the way to enlightenment, hence their retreats on Ojima.

6. To match the grand scenery of Matsushima, Sora suggests the hototogisu (lesser cuckoo, a small plain summer songbird) borrow the body of a magnificent tsuru (crane). (See the print of a tsuru below; for a print depicting a hototogisu, see p. 26, "10. Sesshōseki and Ashino.")

7. Although Bashō didn't include a verse on Matsushima in *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*, he composed one: "island after island—shattered fragments in summer's sea" (*shimajima ya chiji ni kudakete natsu no umi*).

8. The eleventh day of the fifth moon (5.11) was June 28 in 1689. Zuigan Temple

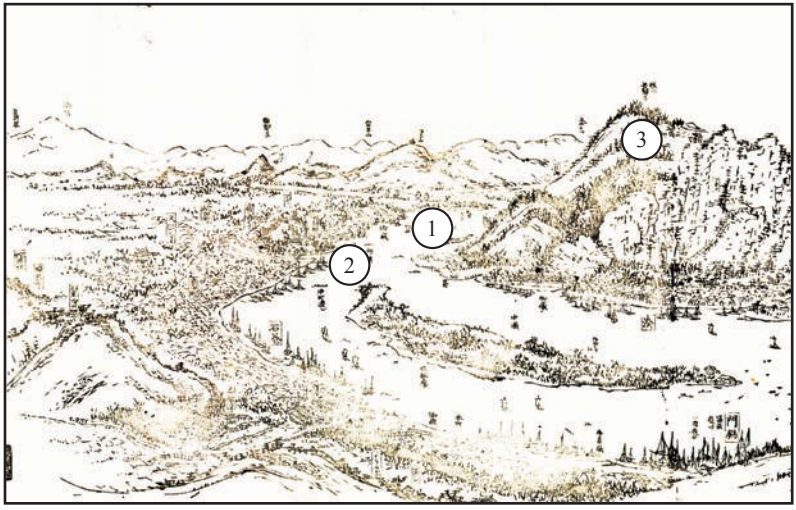
"Crane Flying over Wave." Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

was founded in 828 by Great Teacher Jikaku (Ennin, 794–864) of the Tendai sect. Makabe no Heishirō (1185–1282) changed the temple's affiliation from Tendai to Rinzai Zen and served as abbot (Sato 82, note 162).

In 1636, Date Tadamune (1600–1658) invited Zen Master Ungo Kiyō (1582–1659) to serve as abbot. Ungo's "virtuous reforms" included requiring monks to adhere strictly to precepts, meditate twice daily, chant sutras thrice daily, and perform temple work, such as farming, cooking, and cleaning (Foulk 51).

Sato notes that the restoration of the temple was done not by Ungo, but earlier,

View of Matsushima Bay from Ojima Island.

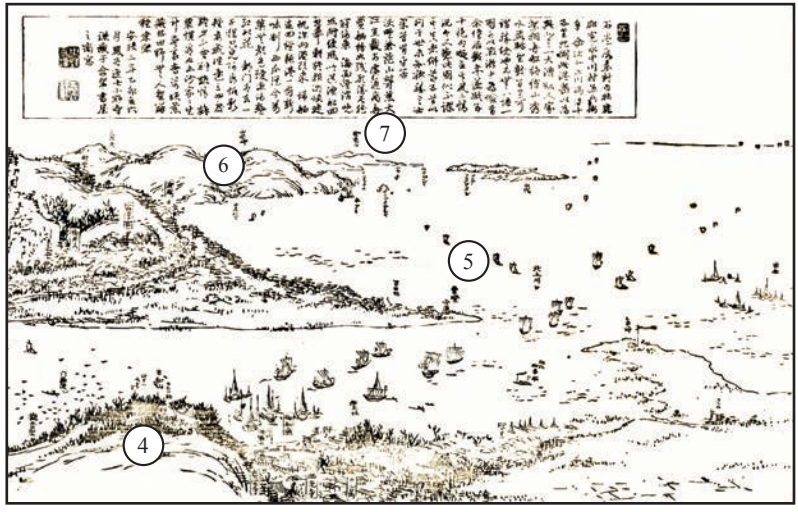


"Panoramic view of Sendai's Ishinomaki Harbor" (1855): (1) Kitakami River flowing south to the harbor of Ishinomaki, (2) Sode Ferry Crossing, (3) Mt. Maki. (Japanese Maps of the Tokugawa Era).

in 1604–1609, under Tadamune's father, Date Masamune (1567–1636) (82, note 163). The exterior walls and roof of the temple appear plain, but the seven interior halls are adorned with golden altars and panels with paintings on gold leaf.

9. Kembutsu was a twelfth-century ascetic who secluded himself on Ojima for 12 years, reciting "sixty thousand scrolls of the Lotus Sutra" (Sato 82, note 164). Bashō identifies him as a hijiri (聖), a charismatic holy man who wanders outside of orthodox institutions and traditions, preaching directly to the common people.

A pine-covered island in Matsushima Bay, layered like a stack of mats.



"Panoramic view of Sendai's Ishinomaki Harbor" (1855): (4) Mt. Hiyori on the west bank of the Kitakami River mouth, (5) Ishinomaki Bay, (6) Oshika Peninsula, (7) Mt. Kinka. (Japanese Maps of the Tokugawa Era).

24. Ishinomaki

On the twelfth, we set out for Hiraizumi; but on the way, we wanted to see the Pine of Aneha, the Bridge of Odae, and other poetic places, so we detoured onto a path hardly used by anyone; we met only a woodcutter and a hunter after rabbits and pheasants. Not sure where we were, we took a wrong turn and ended up at a port called Ishinomaki.[1]

Across the sea, we saw Mt. Kinka, celebrated for its blossoms of gold.[2] Hundreds of cargo boats crowded the bay, and on land, houses vied for space, smoke rising from their cooking fires.[3] We hadn't planned on coming here, and when we looked for lodging, no one had anything to let. We ended up spending the night in a small impoverished house[4]; at daybreak we set off hesitantly again on a road about which we knew little. We followed a river embankment that stretched far to the north, seeing only in passing the Sode Ferry Crossing, the Pastures of Obuchi, the Sedge Fields of Mano, and other poetic places.[5]

After walking along a desolate stretch of marsh, we arrived at a place called Toima and found lodging for the night; the next day we continued on to Hiraizumi. The distance from Ishinomaki to Hiraizumi is over twenty li.[6]

Notes

1. The twelfth day of the fifth moon (5.12) was June 29 in 1689. For the locations of Ishinomaki, see Map 6, 57; for a view of Ishinomaki Harbor, see the pictorial map of the town and bay on pp. 68 and 69.

   The main road north from Sendai to Hiraizumi lay to the west; Bashō and Sora took a less-traveled path eastward to look for poetic places and ended up in Ishinomaki. The Pine of Aneha and the Bridge of Odae are mentioned in classical poetry (Sato 82, notes 165 and 166); apparently Bashō and Sora didn't find these places (Kohl).

2. Mt. Kinka (金花, Gold Blossoms) is an island southeast of Ishinomaki, off the east coast of Oshika Peninsula. (See Map 6, 57 and "Panoramic view of Ishinomaki Harbor," 68–69.) In 749, gold was brought to the Imperial Court from Michinoku, and the event was celebrated in verse: "So His Majesty's generation may prosper, on a Michinoku mountain to the east, gold has bloomed" (Sato 84, note 168).

3. "Smoke from cooking fires" is a phrase in historical narratives used to suggest a prosperous, flourishing land: "the people had plenty . . . and the smoke of cooking was . . . thick (*Nihongi* 279). Where no smoke rises, "the land is all poverty-stricken" (*Kojiki* 327).

4. Ishinomaki was a busy port, but not a post town with accommodations for travelers. Sora records that a man named Jihei put them up for the night (Kohl).

5. Bashō and Sora followed an embankment along the east side of the Kitakami River, the longest river in Mutsu Province. The river passes through Ishinomaki and empties into Ishinomaki Bay.

   The Ferry Crossing of Sodé (袖, Sleeve) is located just north of Mt. Hiyori. (See "Panoramic view of Ishinomaki Harbor," 68.) An eleventh-century poet wrote, "At the Ferry Crossing of Sode in Michinoku, the river of tears flowing in my heart grows limpid" (Sato 84, note 170; the poet puns on "sode," or "sleeves," the name of the crossing and also the sleeves used to wipe a person's tears.)

   East of the river are the Pastures of Obuchi (mottled-tail [horses]) and Sedge Fields of Mano. A tenth-century poet compared her untamed self to a wild horse in the Pastures of Obuchi in Michinoku (Sato 84, note 171); an eighth-century poet suggested that her lover was even more remote from her than the far-off Sedge Fields of Mano (Sato 84, note 172).

6. The village of Toima (戸伊摩, written 登米, Tomé, on modern maps) is about 18 miles north of Ishinomaki, halfway to Hiraizumi. (See Map 6, 57.) The "desolate stretch of marsh" was along the Kitakami River near the town of Yanaizu, 12 miles north from Ishinomaki. (See Map 7, 78.)

   Sora records the dates and itinerary from Matsushima to Hiraizumi differently: he and Bashō left Matsushima on June 27 (5.10). At Ishinomaki, they climbed Mt. Hiyori, from where they saw the Pastures of Obuchi and the Sedge Fields of Mano in the distance, then went down to the Kitakami River to see the Ferry Crossing of Sode (Kohl). The next day they walked to the village of Toima and stayed the night. On June 29 (5.12), they reached Ichinoseki, a post town on the road north from Sendai to Morioka in the Nambu Domain. The following day they visited Hiraizumi, six miles to the north, then returned to Ichinoseki, where they spent the night. (See Map 6, 57 and Map 7, 78.)

Looking south from Yanaizu: the "desolate stretch of marsh" was located along the east bank of the Kitakami River, 12 miles north of Ishinomaki.

25. Hiraizumi

The glory of three generations passed, as if in a single night's sleep.[1] Traces of the Great Gate lie a li to one side. The traces of Hidehira are now just rice paddies and empty fields; only Mt. Kinkei remains unchanged.[2]

Right off, we climbed Takadachi, the hill where Yoshitsune's fortified residence once stood above the broad Kitakami River flowing out of Nambu. Below the hill, the Koromo River bends around the site of Izumi's Fort then joins the big river. The historic remains of Yasuhira and others lie at a distance from the Koromo Barrier, the doorway to Nambu, once fortified to guard against the Ezo.[3]

Oh my! After assembling his loyal retainers, Yoshitsune confined himself in his hilltop residence; the flurries of their heroic deeds are now just thickets and grass.[4] "Country in ruins, only mountains and rivers remain; in springtime at the fort, the grass grows green again."[5] We set down our bamboo hats, and as time went by, we wept.

summer grasses: all that's left of warriors' dreams
夏草や兵どもが夢の跡 / *natsukusa ya tsuwamonodomo ga yume no ato*

Sora wrote:

in blooming unohana, white-haired Kanefusa's ghost[6]
卯の花に兼房みゆる白毛かな / *unohana ni Kanefusa miyuru shiraga kana*

The two buildings about which we heard such marvelous praise were open for viewing. In the Sutra Repository were statues of three commanders. In the Hall of Light were caskets of the three Fujiwara generations, with statues of three buddhas enshrined above.[7] Surely, by now, its seven treasures should have been scattered and lost, its jeweled doors demolished by the wind, its gilded columns rotted by frost and snow; by now, the hall should have lapsed into ruins and vanished into thickets and grass.[8] But new walls enclosing it on four sides and a tiled roof overhead stave off the wind and rain; and so, for now, it endures, a memorial of a thousand years:

unscathed by the fifth-moon rains—Hall of Light[9]
五月雨の降のこしてや光堂 / *samidare no furinokoshite ya hikaridō*

Notes

1. Three generations of the Ōshū Fujiwara—Kiyohira (1056–1128), Motohira (1105–1157), and Hidehira (1122–1187)—ruled northern Honshu from Hiraizumi. (Ōshū was another name for Mutsu Province and Oku.) Yasuhira (1155–1189), the fourth and last Fujiwara ruler, was killed when the Fujiwara lands were taken by the forces of Minamoto no Yoritomo, head of the Genji, who emerged from the Gempei War (1180–1185) as the most powerful warlord in Japan. When Bashō and Sora visited Hiraizumi five centuries after Yasuhira's death, few traces remained of the Fujiwara capital and its magnificent temple complexes—Chūson, built by Kiyohira; Mōtsū, built by Motohira and Hidehira; and Muryōkō, built by Hidehira.

   The first temple at Hiraizumi was established in 850 by Great Teacher Jikaku

***Top**: Takadachi Hill, the site of Yoshitsune's fortified residence.*
***Bottom**: Looking north from Takadachi: "... the broad Kitakami River flowing south out of Nambu."*

of the Tendai sect, who also established Zuigan Temple in Matsushima. (See "23. Matsushima," note 6.)

2. "Traces of the Great Gate": Nandaimon (Great Gate of the South) was the main entrance of Mōtsū Temple. The two-story gate stood at the south end of the north-south axis, with the main temple building to the north, across a pond. When Bashō visited, most of the buildings were gone. In 1226 the main hall was destroyed by fire; the Great Gate and two other buildings burned down in the sixteenth century (*Nomination*).

   "Traces of Hidehira": to the east of Mōtsū Temple, Hidehira built Muryōkō Temple in imitation of the Amida Hall of Byōdō Temple in Uji, near Kyōto. Destroyed by fire in the mid-thirteenth century, Muryōkō was gone when Bashō visited. Between the Muryōkō site and the west bank of the Kitakami River, in a grassy field below Takadachi, traces of the Ōshū Fujiwara residences and government offices have been excavated. The area is called Yanagi-no-gosho (Willow Palace) (*Nomination*).

   Muryōkō Temple was aligned to the sun setting over Mt. Kinkei, a hill a third of a mile due west, in the direction of Amida's Western Pure Land. On the peak of Mt. Kinkei (Golden Chickens), Hidehira is said to have buried a golden rooster and hen as guardians of Hiraizumi. Sutras have been found in a mound at the summit.

3. The Genji commander Minamoto no Yoshitsune is not mentioned by name in the allusive, elliptical narrative, but he is its central character. Readers would have known the story of his heroic life and tragic death because it had been told, retold, and embellished for five centuries, in legends, chronicles, romances, ballad-dances, nō dramas, and kabuki and puppet plays. (See "15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji," notes 4 and 6, and "22. Illustrious Deities of Shiogama," note 3.)

   Takadachi ("Fortified Residence on a Height") was the name of Yoshitsune's hilltop residence overlooking the Kitakami River, built for him by Hidehira.

   Nambu refers to the domain of the Nambu clan north of Hiraizumi. The clan

Great South Gate stood on the south side of Ōizumi Pond at Mōtsū Temple; stones in the gravel mark the position of the gate's posts..

was originally from the "southern section" (nambu) of Kai Province, west of Edo, hence the clan's name.

Yoshitsune fled from Yoritomo, his older-brother-turned-adversary, and took refuge in Hiraizumi under the protection of Hidehira. Hidehira died soon after Yoshitsune arrived, and Yoritomo obtained an imperial decree ordering his younger brother's execution. Yoritomo offered Hidehira's heir, Yasuhira, a province to capture and kill Yoshitsune. When Yasuhira received the offer and imperial decree, he began plotting against Yoshitsune (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 281–282). Of Hidehira's five sons, only the third son, Izumi no Saburō, remained true to his oath to serve and protect Yoshitsune. (See Bashō's praise of Izumi in "22. Illustrious Deities of Shiogama," note 3.)

The battle of Izumi's Fort (Izumigajō) is told in "*A Libretto*: Izumi's Fortress" (Araki 171–195). The fort was about a mile northwest of Takadachi, at a bend of the Koromo River that protected it on three sides. Yasuhira sent a force of three thousand to demand that Izumi commit suicide for opposing him. Realizing he was doomed, Izumi killed his two sons, then battled the warriors sent by his brother. Izumi and his wife, Fujinoe, fought bravely, but eventually took their own lives. Izumi's wife was the younger sister of Satō Tsugunobu. (See "15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji," note 3.)

The Koromo Barrier and stockade, an ancient site just north of Izumi's Fort, was no longer there when Bashō visited. The barrier is mentioned in a love poem of the Heian Period (794–1185) about a husband leaving without his wife for the Koromo Barrier in Michinoku (Sato 86, note 181). Like Shirakawa Barrier and Taga Fort, the Koromo Barrier had been constructed to protect imperial lands from the Ezo clans.

4. After Yoshitsune learned of the imperial decree ordering his execution, he withdrew into his fortified residence on Takadachi to prepare himself for death. Yasuhira sent a force of twenty or thirty thousand against Takadachi. Yoshitsune's 10 loyal retainers fought heroically, but were slain, one after another. (Before

The site of Hidehira's Muryōkō Temple: the main temple was on the mound (formerly an island surrounded by the pond). Mt. Kinkei appears in the distance, due west.

the battle, another group of retainers had fled to save themselves.) As the last retainers held off the attackers, Yoshitsune recited a sutra, then disemboweled himself to avoid capture and beheading (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 283–290). After his death, his last retainer set the residence ablaze (see note 6 below), but Yoshitsune's body was recovered, and the severed head, preserved in saké, was sent to Yoritomo. After receiving the head, Yoritomo, who saw the Fujiwara as rivals, invaded and conquered their lands. Ironically, he had his ally Yasuhira, the last Ōshū Fujiwara ruler, killed and beheaded (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 290–293).

Standing atop Takadachi, Bashō was overwhelmed with emotion realizing that he was at the very spot where Yoshitsune, along with his loyal retainers and family, was killed, and no traces were left of them in the thickets and grass.

5. Bashō quotes from a verse by Chinese poet Du Fu (712–770), then borrows its imagery for his verse.

6. Bashō's and Sora's verses use the nō drama convention of lamentation at an ancient battlefield to conjure up the ghosts of warriors in scenes of devastation (Shirane, *Traces* 239). One commentator notes, "An ancient battlefield is a sacred place where mythology, history, and literature originate": "It is a kind of purgatory, a place where the souls of the slain soldiers, still retaining their anger and resentment utter war cries day and night. The nō drama, which often stages the sufferings of ancient warriors in beautiful poetic form, can be considered the end product of an artistic tradition that originated in the literature intended to soothe the souls that haunted the locale" (Ueda, *Bashō* 243).

In a bush of white fourth-moon flowers (unohana or deutzia), Sora sees the shade of white-haired Kanefusa, the guardian of Yoshitsune's wife. As Yoshitsune lay dying, his wife ordered the aged Kanefusa to kill her and her five-year-old son and seven-day-old daughter, so the family could depart together to the afterworld. After reluctantly complying, Kanefusa set fire to the building, then went outside and killed the leader of the attacking forces and dragged the leader's brother into the flames, where they both perished (McCullough, *Yoshitsune* 291–293).

Today, near the trail-head to the summit of Mt. Kinkei is a five-tiered stupa marking the graves of Yoshitsune's wife and children. Also in Hiraizumi is the tomb of the warrior-priest Benkei, who died defending Yoshitsune at Takadachi. (On Benkei and Yoshitsune, see "15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji," note 6.) Below Takadachi is a memorial to Kanefusa, marked by a memorial stone (inscribed with Sora's verse) and a tall unohana bush.

7. Kiyohira, the first Fujiwara ruler, built the Chūson Temple complex as an embodiment of Amida's Western Pure Land. Most of the buildings were destroyed by fire in 1337, but the buildings that Bashō saw—the Sutra Repository (経蔵, Kyō-zō) and the Hall of Light (光堂, Hikari-dō) with its Outer Hall (覆堂, Ōi-dō)—were still there and have been preserved till today (*Nomination*).

In the wooden Sutra Repository (built in 1108 and restored in the fourteenth century) are statues of Monju Bosatsu (bodhisattva of wisdom), riding on a lion, with four attendants alongside, including the Great King Udayana and Zenzai Dōji, Monju's student who went on a pilgrimage, achieved enlightenment, and became a bodhisattva.

The Hall of Light, also known as the Golden Hall (金色堂, Konjiki-dō), is the

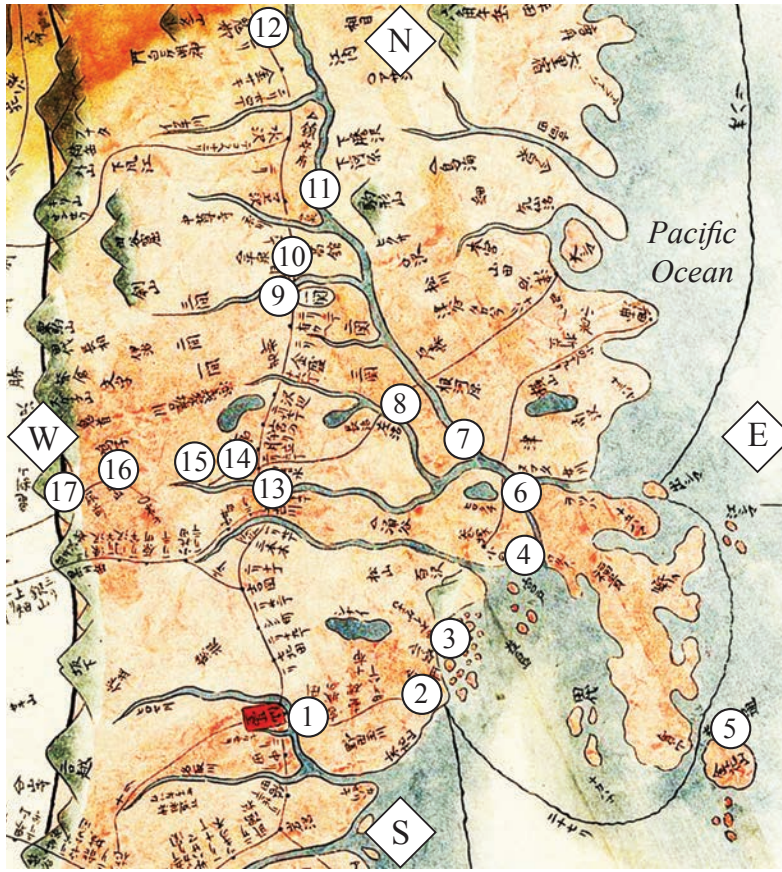
mausoleum of the Fujiwara. The hall is adorned with gold leaf and silver powder on black lacquer, with mother-of-pearl and lapis lazuli inlay. It houses the mummified bodies of Kiyohira, Motohira, and Hidehira, and Yasuhira's mummified head. (Mummification was an ancient practice of the Ezo clans.) Above the caskets are three statues of buddhas—Amida Buddha flanked by Kannon, bodhisattva of compassion, and Seishi, bodhisattva of wisdom (*Nomination*).

8. "Seven treasures": in Buddhist tradition, the seven earthly treasures are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal glass, giant clam shell, coral, and agate (Sato 86, note 188).

***Top**: The empty wooden Outer Hall at Chūson Temple.*
***Bottom**: The refurbished Hall of Light (Hikaridō), aka Golden Hall (Konjikidō) inside a new concrete Outer Hall* (© Susumu Matsushita Building and Lighting Design Office 2012). For a close-up of the altar with the statues of three buddhas, see "Religious Contexts" (161).

9. In Bashō's verse, the summer rains represent the destructive force of time and corruption in a transient and illusory world; the gilded hall stands for Amida's Jōdo (Pure Land), a place beyond time and change where the faithful go after death to be instructed in achieving Nirvana to escape the karmic cycles of rebirth.

In 1288, the wooden Outer Hall was built by the Kamakura Shogunate around the Hall of Light to protect it. The Outer Hall that Bashō saw was a fifteenth century reconstruction of the original; repairs were made by Date Masamune in the 1620's (Kohl). Today, the Hall of Light, refurbished with gold leaf, is in a concrete air-conditioned Outer Hall at the original site. The wooden Outer Hall, empty, has been moved to a site nearby.



7. Mutsu Province, **Shiogama to the Shitomae Barrier** (1830 Map): (1) Sendai, (2) Shiogama, (3) Matsushima, (4) Ishinomaki, (5) Mt. Kinka, (6) Kitakami River, (7) Naganuma (Long Marsh), (8) Toima (Tome), (9) Ichinoseki, (10) Hiraizumi, (11) Kitakami River, (12) Nambu Domain, (13) Eai River, (14) Iwate (Iwadeyama), (15) Ogura Point and Mizu Islet, (16) Narugo, (17) Shitomae Barrier.

26. Shitomae Barrier

We gazed back at the far road to Nambu, then found lodging in Iwate Village.[1]

The next day we passed Ogura Point and Mizu Islet;[2] from Narugo Hot Springs, we arrived at the Shitomae Barrier on our way to Dewa Province.[3] Travelers on this road are infrequent, so the barrier guard regarded us with suspicion before finally allowing us through.

As we crossed the high mountains, the sun set, so we stopped at the house of a Dewa border guard and asked for a place to stay.[4] Three-days of stormy winds and rains followed[5]; we were stuck in the mountains with no reason to be there:

fleas, lice, and a horse pissing near my grass pillow[6]
蚤虱馬の尿する枕もと / *nomi shirami uma no bari suru makura moto*

Our host told us, "Between here and where you're going are high mountains, and the path isn't easy to follow. Best to entrust your crossing to someone who knows the way."

"In that case," I replied, "we'll request a guide." A robust young man showed up, wearing a curved sword on his side and holding an oak staff. He set out, leading the way; afraid that today would surely be the day we ran into trouble, we followed close behind. As our host said, the mountains were high and heavily forested; we heard not a single bird call; in the gloom under the densely overgrown trees, it was like walking at night. As if caught in a dust storm swirling at the edge of clouds,[7] we stumbled along, pushing through bamboo grass, slogging across streams, and tripping over rocks; bodies dripping with cold sweat, we emerged in Mogami Domain.[8]

The guide said, "Something bad always happens on this trail; by luck, we made it safely." He parted cheerfully, but his words made our hearts beat rapidly.

Notes

1. On July 1 (5.14), Bashō and Sora left the Nambu Road to get to Iwate (岩手, written 岩出山, Iwadeyama, on modern maps), a village 26 miles southwest of Ichinoseki. (See Map 7, 78.) Iwate was a castle town of the Date clan. After being awarded the Sendai Domain by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600, the clan moved its headquarters to Sendai and built Aoba Castle, completed in 1637.

2. After an overnight stop in Iwate, Bashō and Sora continued west along the Eai River, passing Ogura Point and Mizu Islet, which are poetic places mentioned in an anonymous poem in the tenth-century *Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems* (*Kokinshū*): "If Mizu Islet at Ogura Point were a person, I'd say let's take her back to the capital as a gift."

3. The Shitomae Barrier was established in 712 at Narugo, Mutsu Province, near its border with Dewa Province. "Shitomae" (尿前) means "piss in front of"; Bashō's verse about the pissing horse alludes to the name, which is said to come from a story about Genji commander Yoshitsune: his infant son, born west of Narugo in the Kamewari Mountains, urinated at the barrier. Narugo (Child's Cry), the nearby hot-spring town, was so named because Yoshitsune's son cried there (Kohl).

***Top**: Mizu Islet in the Eai River (looking downstream toward Iwate).*
***Bottom**: Narugo Onsen on the Eai River (looking upstream toward the Shitomae Barrier).*

4. Having crossed the border into Dewa Province, Bashō and Sora stopped for the night at a border guard's house in Sakaida, six miles past the Shitomae Barrier. Today, a reconstructed house at the site on Route 47 serves as a museum commemorating Bashō's journey.

5. Sora records that he and Bashō took lodging at the border guard's house on July 2 (5.15); the next day was stormy; they left for Obanazawa the day after, going over Natagiri Mountain Pass (1,542 feet), with Mt. Omori (2,854 feet) to the east (Kohl).

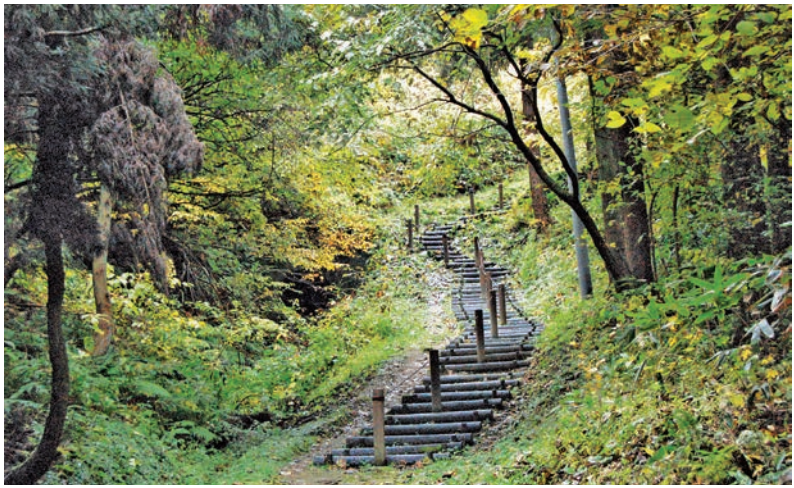
6. For a note on grass pillows (kusa no makura), see "5. 'Hotoke' Gozaemon," note 3.

7. To suggest his sense of disorientation, Bashō borrows an image from lines in a poem by Du Fu (712–770), which Barnhill translates, "As I climb the windy stone

***Top**: ". . . the barrier guard regarded us with suspicion."* Yosa Buson (1716–1784).
***Bottom**: Memorial to the Shitomae Barrier.*

steps, a dust storm blows from the edge of clouds" (163, note 87).

8. The Mogami Domain, ruled by the Mogami clan, once extended over most of Dewa Province. In 1622, due to inheritance issues, the Tokugawa Shogunate reduced the domain and assigned it to another family. The new domain was called Yamagata, after the town where the administrator's castle was located.



***Top**: Trail from the Shitomae Barrier to the border guard's house in Dewa Province (Yamagata Prefecture).*
***Bottom**: Bashō and Sora with the Dewa mountain guide.* Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

27. Obanazawa

In Obanazawa, we looked for a man named Seifū. He was rich, but not uncultured.[1] From time to time, he traveled to the capital, so naturally, he knew what it was like to be on the road[2]; we stopped for a number of days[3]; mindful of our long journey, he treated us kindly, making us feel at home in every way.

making coolness our lodging, we rested[4]
涼しさを我宿にしてねまる也 / *suzushisa o waga yado ni shite nemaru kana*

come out, toad! I hear you croaking under the silkworm shed
這出よかひやが下のひきの声 / *hai-ide yo kaiya ga shita no hiki no koe*

looking like eyebrow brushes, safflowers[5]
まゆはきを俤にして紅粉の花 / *mayuhaki o omokage ni shite beni no hana*

Sora wrote:

womenfolk tending silkworms, figures from antiquity[6]
蠶飼する人は古代のすがた哉 / *kogai suru hito wa kodai no sugata kana*

Notes

1. Suzuki Seifū (1651–1721) was a safflower merchant in Obanazawa (尾花沢, Pampas-Grass Marsh; see Map 8, 87 for its location.) Merchants were stereotyped as boorish money-dogs, but Seifū, whom Bashō had met in Edo, was an accomplished poet and a publisher of poetry anthologies, one of which included a poem by Bashō (Kohl).

2. Kyōto, the capital, was 450 miles from Obanazawa via river, sea, and land routes.

3. Bashō and Sora spent 10 days in Obanazawa, from July 4–14 (5.17–5.27).

4. Bashō led two sessions for composing linked verses, with Seifū participating. The lightness of the four verses in this section contrasts with the complaint verse written in the dismal mountains at Sakaida. The first verse, with "coolness" (涼しさ, suzushisa) as a summer season-word, served as the starter verse for one of the sessions. It compliments Seifū's lodging, the coolness a welcome relief from the summer heat. A careful host might artificially evoke coolness with greenery, shade, the sound of water, wind chimes, and so on.

5. Safflower (紅花, benihana, "crimson-powder flower") came to Japan from South

or West Asia via the Silk Road and China. It was introduced to Japan by Korean monks. The petals were plucked, dried, and processed into a crimson pulp used to make cosmetics (rouge and lipstick) and cloth-dyes.

6. Sericulture was brought to Japan from China around the third century. Women in a household generally did the work of raising silkworms.

Benihana (safflower)

Women engaged in the sericulture industry (two of a 12-print series). ***Left:*** *"3. Feeding the silkorms [mulberry leaves]."* ***Right****: "6. The cocoon stage."* Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806).

28. Ryūshaku Temple

In the territory of Yamagata is a mountain temple called Ryūshaku-ji. Founded by Great Teacher Jikaku, it's a place of exceptional tranquility. People told us we must go and see it, so at Obanazawa, we turned around, detouring away from where we were going; we traveled seven li and reached the temple before sundown.[1] At the foot of the mountain, we secured lodging in the monks' quarters, then climbed to the worship halls above.

Crags on crags formed a steep mountain face; age-old pines and cedars stood over weathered earth and stones and slick moss; the doors of the sub-temples on the way up were shut, no sounds from within. After going around a bank and clambering up a rock face, we bowed in veneration at the Buddha Hall; in the quiet, lonely beauty of the setting, I found my heart at peace.

untroubled: cicada voices sinking into rock[2]
閑さや岩にしみ入蝉の声 / *shizukesa ya iwa ni shimiiru semi no koe*

Notes

1. Ryūshaku-ji (立石寺, Standing Rock Temple, aka Yamadera, 山寺, Mountain Temple) is about 20 miles south of Obanazawa. (See Map 8, 87). Bashō and Sora were headed northwest from Obanazawa to ride a boat down the Mogami River to the Three Mountains of Dewa; instead, on July 14 (5.27), they detoured south to visit Yamadera. Seifū, their host in Obanazawa, provided them with a horse for part of the way (to Tateoka); they arrived at Yamadera at 3:30 pm (Kohl). The temple was founded in 860 by Jikaku Daishi (Ennin, 794–864), who also founded Zuigan Temple in Matsushima in 828 and Chūson Temple in Hiraizumi in 850.

2. "Cicada" is a summer season-word. When the insects emerge from the ground in warm summer weather to mate, the air is dense with their shrill voices. They lay their eggs, then die in a week or two. Because of their brief lives, they serve as a conventional symbol for the transiency of human life. Bashō composed another verse on cicada, in summer 1690: "soon to

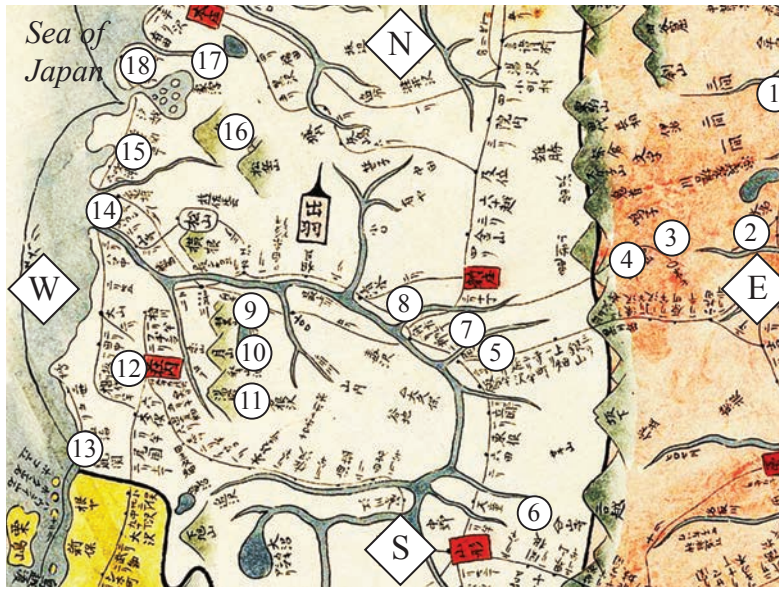
***Right**: Cicada molting*

die, but showing no signs, cicada voices" (*yagate shinu keshiki wa miezu semi no koe*). But cicadas also molt after they appear, shedding their old shells; so they also represent the soul disengaging from the body and being reborn into a new, enlightened life, the goal of Buddhist pilgrimage and meditation. The hint of rebirth foreshadows Bashō's sudden awakening at Yudono. (See "30. Three Mountains of Dewa," notes 10 and 11.)

Bashō describes the setting as 寂寞, jyaku-maku; both characters mean "lonely, quiet" and are also read "sabishii," a term referring to loneliness in a transient world, an emotion rooted in the Buddhist view of human life as a fleeting illusion.

Top *Perched atop a crag, Founder's Hall (Kaizandō) enshrines a wooden statue of Great Teacher Jikaku, whose remains are said to rest in a cave below the Sutra Repository Hall (Nokyōdō, to the left).* ***Bottom****: Sub-temples line the pathway up to the Inner Hall and Great Buddha Hall.*

At the upper end of a 1,015-step pathway is the temple's spiritual center. Inner Hall (Oku-no-in, the old temple on the right) enshrines statues of Shaka Nyorai and Tahō Nyorai. Great Teacher Jikaku is said to have carried the statues during his training in China. Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsu-den, on the left) enshrines a golden statue of Amida Buddha.



8. Mutsu Province to Dewa Province (1830 Map). ***Mutsu Province***: (1) Hiraizumi, (2) Iwate, (3) Narugo, (4) Shitomae Barrier. ***Dewa Province***: (5) Obanazawa, (6) Yamadera, (7) Ōishida, (8) Mogami River, (9) Mt. Haguro, (10) Gassan, (11) Mt. Yudono, (12) Tsurugaoka (Shōnai), (13) Mt. Atsumi, (14) Sakata, where the Mogami River enters the Sea of Japan, (15) Fuku Inlet, (16) Mt. Chōkai, (17) Kisa Lagoon, (18) Shiogoshi.

29. Mogami River

We waited at Ōishida for good weather to ride a boat down the Mogami River.[1] Here the seeds of old haikai were scattered. The local poets held to that past of never-forgotten flowers, moderating the spirit of their rustic voices. They followed tentatively that old way, but got lost because now there were two ways, old and new. When they asked for my instruction, I couldn't say no, so I led them in composing a sequence of linked verses and left it for them as a guide. This journey's fūryū [natural elegance] was achieved here.[2]

The Mogami River flows out of Michinoku, its upper waters in Yamagata. Go Stones and Falcon Rapids are dangerous spots. The river flows past the north side of Mt. Itajiki and empties into the sea at Sakata. With mountains on both sides, boats go downriver between banks thick with vegetation. Here, loaded with rice, the boats were apparently what a poet called inafune [rice boats].[3] White-Threads Falls appears in the dense green foliage; Mountain-Wizard Hall stands on the bank facing the river. When the waters rise, boats are imperiled.

amassing summer rains, swift Mogami River[4]
五月雨をあつめて早し最上川 / *samidare o atsumete hayashi mogamigawa*

Notes

1. Bashō and Sora left Ryūshaku Temple on July 15 (5.28) and spent two days in Ōishida, near Obanazawa; then two days in Shinjo, 12 miles north of Ōishida. On July 20 (6.3), they went to Motoaikai, five miles southwest of Shinjo, and boarded a boat for a 14-mile downriver ride to a landing near the Three Mountains of Dewa (Kohl). (See Map 8, 87.)

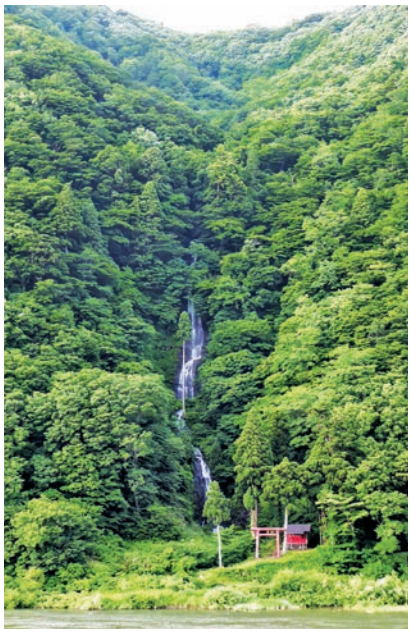
2. For notes on the old and new ways of haikai and on the composition of linked verses (renga), see "Renga and Haikai" (156). At Ōishida, Bashō conducted a renga session with Sora and two local poets, one of them his host Takano Ichiei, who owned a lodging for boatmen (Kohl).

   Bashō uses two characters, "ashi" (芦, reed) and "tsuno" (角, horn or antler) to describe the voices of the local poets. The characters are glossed "ro-kaku," translated "reed pipe" or "reeds and horns," and interpreted as a reference to the rustic culture of the region. ("Ashi no tsuno" also refers to "horns of reeds," or "reed sprouts," suggesting budding poets needing to refine their compositions.)

   Natural elegance (風流, fūryū, wind-flow) is an aesthetic ideal Bashō aimed for in poetry. (See note 4 in "12. Sukagawa" and note 5 in "19. Sendai.") At Ōishida Bashō guided the uncertain local writers along a complex poetic path, just as earlier

the mountain guide helped Sora and him find their way over the hard-to-find-and-follow mountain path to Obanazawa.

3. Bashō refers to a poem in the tenth-century *Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems* (*Kokinshū*). The love poem describes inafune [rice boats] carried swiftly downriver, then puns on "ina," which means both "rice" and "no." (Sato 94, note 210).



White-Threads Falls (Shiraito no Taki).

4. Bashō's verse suggests a Buddhist parable: swollen with rain and flowing down rapids, one called "Go Stones," studded with rocks, the river represents both the relentless passage of time and the dangers of swamping or running aground in the karmic cycles of rebirth. The river flows westward, toward the setting sun, suggesting the fleeting passage of life toward death and hell, limbo, or Amida's Western Pure Land, depending on a person's actions, prayers, or faith. An earlier version of the verse served as the starter for the renga session at Ōishida. In that version, Bashō used "cool" (涼し, suzushi) to describe the river and to compliment the home of his host (Kohl), as he did at Obanazawa. Bashō later changed "cool" to "swift" (早し, hayashi).

Mogami River on a summer afternoon at a bend near the landing at Motoaikai.

30. Three Mountains of Dewa

On the third day of the sixth moon, we reached Mt. Haguro. We looked for a man named Zushi Sakichi, who took us to an audience with the acting administrator, High Monk Egaku. He housed us at the branch temple in South Valley and hosted us with cordial compassion.[1]

On the fourth day, we gathered at Egaku's residence to compose a sequence of linked verses:

thank you—South Valley, fragrant with snow[2]
有難や雪をかほらす南谷 / *arigata ya yuki o kaorasu Minamidani*

On the fifth day, we worshiped at the gongen temple, which was founded by Great Teacher Nōjo. To which era he belongs is uncertain.[3]

Ceremonies and Rites of the Engi Era mentions a shrine named Sato-yama [里山, Village-Mountain] in U-shū [羽州, Feathers Province]. When the text was copied, was the character for "sato" [里, village] mistakenly replaced by "kuro" [黒, black]? Was U-shū Kuro-yama [羽州黒山] then shortened to the present name of Mt. Haguro [羽黒山, Mt. Black-Feathers]? According to *Descriptions of Cultural and Natural Features*, this province was named Dewa [出羽, Exporting Feathers] because of its annual tribute of bird feathers.[4]

Mt. Haguro, along with Gassan [Moon Mountain] and Mt. Yudono [Hot Spring Hall], are called the Three Mountains of Dewa.[5] The temple at Mt. Haguro belongs to the temple at Mt. Tōei in Edo. Under the bright moon of Tendai Buddhism's meditation goals of Concentration and Insight, Mt. Haguro holds up the dharma lamp of Perfect, Immediate Enlightenment as well as Chanting Buddha's Name for the Benefit of All. The ridge-poles of the monk quarters are lined up, and everyone is devoted to the rules of ascetic austerities and monastic living.[6] The beneficial effects and efficacy of the practices of this holy mountain and holy land evoke reverence and awe in everyone. With its enduring prosperity, this honored mountain must certainly be recognized as auspicious.

On the eighth day, we ascended Gassan. With cords of mulberry-bark fibers draped around our necks and white cotton wraps covering our heads,[7] we were guided by a brawny porter through the clouds and mist of mountain air. We climbed eight li up a path of ice and snow, wondering if we had passed through the barrier gate of clouds and entered the road traveled by the sun and moon. We reached the summit out of breath, our bodies numb and cold. As the sun set, the eight-day-old moon appeared.[8] With bamboo grass spread for bedding

and bundles of dwarf bamboo for pillows, we lay down to rest, awaiting dawn. When the sun rose, the clouds vanished, and we descended to Yudono.

On the side of this valley was a so-called small-hut foundry. The swordsmiths of this province chose the miraculous waters here to purify themselves for tempering blades. When finished, the blades were inscribed "Gassan" and were highly regarded by the world. Were their blades like those tempered at Dragon Spring in southern China? The ancient times of Gan Jiang and Mo Ye are dearly missed; it's well known that their devotion to mastery in the Way was not a trifling matter.[9]

Near a boulder where I sat resting was a sakura tree about three feet high, with buds half opened. Its heart was matchless; this late-blooming sakura hadn't forgotten spring while buried under a load of fallen snow. I felt as if I were smelling "plum blossoms under a blazing summer sky";[10] recalling the pathos of Bishop Gyōson's poem intensified my awakening.[11]

The training and rules of pilgrims forbid us to speak about the particulars of Mt. Yudono, so my writing brush stops here.[12]

We returned to Egaku's residence, and at his request, on strips of mulberry-paper, I composed commemorative verses about the Three Mountains:

coolness: a faint third-day crescent at Mt. Haguro
涼しさやほの三か月の羽黒山 / *suzushisa ya hono mikazuki no haguro-yama*

cloud peaks, countless, collapsing below Moon Mountain[13]
雲の峯幾つ崩て月の山 / *kumo no mine ikutsu kuzurete tsuki no yama*

forbidden to disclose Yudono's secrets: wet sleeves[14]
語られぬ湯殿にぬらす袂かな / *katararenu yudono ni nurasu tamoto kana*

Sora wrote:

in tears on the way to Mt. Yudono, we step on coins[15]
湯殿山銭ふむ道の泪かな / *yudono-yama zeni fumu michi no namida kana*

Notes

1. The third day of the sixth moon (6.3) was July 20 in 1689. (The sixth moon is called Minatsuki [水無月, Moon of Water] because rice plants needed watering.)

   Bashō and Sora disembarked at the boat landing at Kiyokawa (or Karikawa) and walked to Tōgé, a town 10 miles from the river, near Mt. Haguro. Zushi Sakichi, a fabric dyer, presented their introduction letter written by Ichiei (see "29. Mogami River," note 2) to Egaku, whose title is Ajari (阿闍利, High Monk, an exemplary monk worthy of teaching).

   Zushi went with Bashō and Sora to South Valley (Minami-dani), on the SW side

of Mt. Haguro. He also showed Bashō around the area and expressed an interest in poetry; later, he visited Bashō in Edo (Kohl).

2. Bashō's verse started a renga session with eight participants (Sato 146, endnote 14). The verse uses the conventional notion that southerly winds are fragrant (Ueda, *Bashō* 253). As at Obanazawa, Bashō compliments his host's lodging for its summer coolness. The snow on Gassan, 11 miles south of Mt. Haguro, starts melting in May but is still present in July, so a southerly mountain breeze would have brought a welcomed coolness.

3. A gongen temple is a temple where a buddha manifested in a Shintō deity is worshiped. (See note 5 below; also "Religious Contexts," 160–161.) Nōjo Daishi (大師, Great Teacher) is believed to be the third son of Emperor Sushun (r. 587–592).

The Mogami River flowing from the Three Mountains of Dewa (Gassan at the horizon), down to Sakata Harbor. Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

4. The tenth-century *Ceremonies and Rites of the Engi Era* (*Engi Shiki*) is a collection of "laws, rituals, and prayers." The eighth-century *Descriptions of Cultural and Natural Features* (*Fudoki*) is a geography of the province (Barnhill 164, note 98).

5. The Three Mountains of Dewa are a pilgrimage site for the Tendai sect, which holds that Shintō kami are manifestations of buddhas, called gongen. According to the *Encyclopedia of Shintō* ("Dewasanzan Shinkō"), each of the Three Mountains enshrines a gongen:

   Mt. Haguro (1,358 feet): the gongen temple-shrine is dedicated to Kannon, bodhisattva of mercy, manifested in Tamayorihime, "Divine Bride."

   Gassan (6,509 feet): the gongen temple-shrine is dedicated to Amida Buddha, manifested in Tsukiyomi, the moon kami, brother of the sun kami Amaterasu. Gassan (月山) means Moon Mountain.

   Mt. Yudono (4,934 feet): Yudono (Hot Spring Hall) is located in a ravine below Mt. Yudono, a spur on the southwest side of Gassan. The gongen temple-shrine is dedicated to Dainichi, the cosmic Buddha, manifested in the kami Ōyamazumi (Great Deity of Mountains).

6. The temple on Mt. Tōei in Edo, called Kan'ei Temple, was established in 1625 (the

second year of the Kan'ei Era) to emulate Enryaku Temple, the Tendai headquarters on Mt. Hiei in Kyōto. Mt Tōei (Eastern Mt. Hiei) is a hill in the Ueno district of Tōkyō. (See the print of Ueno in "2. Setting Out.") The Tokugawa family provided the land, and Kan'ei served as their family temple. Six shoguns are buried there. The temple's abbot was chosen from among the emperor's children or nephews.

Tendai was a sect of Buddhism founded by the priest Saichō (767–822) after his study of Ti'en-tai teachings in China. Tendai taught that all beings have an innate Buddha nature and that this realization can be achieved by everyone, suddenly and perfectly, through meditation and ascetic training.

Saichō's follower, Great Teacher Jikaku (794-864) introduced the practice of chanting the Buddha's name for the benefit of all (yūzū-nembutsu, "Interfusing Recitation of Buddha's Name"). Jikaku established Tendai temples around the nation, including three temples visited earlier by Bashō and Sora: Zuigan (23.

***Top**: Mt. Haguro. **Bottom**: The gongen temple-shrine atop Mt. Haguro.*

Matsushima), Chūson (25. Hiraizumi), and Ryūshaku (28. Ryūshaku Temple).

7. For protection after purification, pilgrims wore yūshime, cords (shime) made of mulberry-bark fibers (yū); and hōkan ("sacred crowns"), white cotton head wraps, with the loose ends hanging over the chest. The pilgrimage to the Three Mountains represents a journey of symbolic death and rebirth through rituals and austerities, with the goal to become a bodhisattva, reborn in the world to assist others toward enlightenment. Mt. Haguro represents the past of suffering. Gassan is the place where spirits go after death. (Pilgrims wear white to signify their deaths.) Yudono is the future, a place of rebirth. (See note 14 below; see "8. Kurobane," note 4, on the austerities called Shugen [mountain asceticism] practiced at the Three Mountains of Dewa.)

8. The trail over Gassan to Yudono is over 14 miles long. On 6.8, the eight-day-old moon appears at sunset a quarter of the sky behind the sun setting north of west.

***Top**: From Mt. Haguro, the approach to Gassan, its summit hidden in clouds.*
***Bottom**: Above the clouds, the temple-shrine at the summit of Gassan* (city.sagae.yamagata.jp).

9. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, swordsmiths in the area used the name Gassan; when Bashō visited four centuries later, the small-hut foundry he saw was being used as a dormitory for priests (Kohl). Dragon Spring (龍泉, Ryūsen) in China was famous for its miraculous waters used in sword-making. Gan Jiang and Mo Ye, husband and wife, were legendary Chinese swordsmiths during the Spring and Autumn Period (771–403 BC). A pair of legendary swords they forged, said to represent yin and yang, were named after them. Way (道, dō) refers to religious teachings, here Daoism. (For a note on Daoist influence on Bashō's view of life, see "12. Sukagawa, note 4.)

10. "Plum blossoms under a blazing summer sky" is a Zen metaphor for unexpected, sudden enlightenment. (Plum trees usually bloom in late winter, not in late summer.)

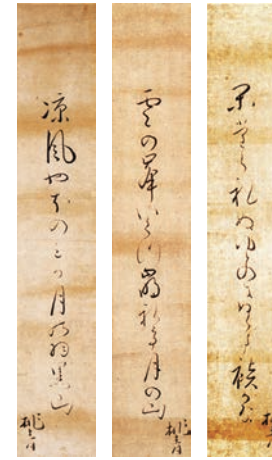
11. Gyōson (1055–1135) was a mountain ascetic who became a bishop (僧正, Sōjō), then archbishop (大僧正, Daisōjō) of the Tendai sect. The late-blooming sakura reminds Bashō of a poem by Gyōson about unexpectedly encountering a sakura tree blossoming while walking alone on a sacred peak: "mountain cherry tree, let's share this moment of pathos; I know no one here, just your blossoms" (Poem 66 in the thirteenth-century anthology *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each* (*Hyakunin Isshu*). The late-blooming sakura that hadn't forgotten spring suggests Bashō's own awakening to his innate Buddha nature. (See note 6 above.) On a mountain pilgrimage such sudden awareness of reality (i.e., enlightenment) comes from empathy with the natural world.

12. The inner shrine (Oku-no-in) of Yudono ia located at the foot of Mt. Yudono in a ravine above a rushing stream still icy in summer from melting snow. The object of worship is a triad of rocks, the tallest 12 feet high and flanked by two lower rocks, just as Gassan is flanked by Mt. Haguro and Mt. Yudono.

    The gods of the mountains reside in the rocks, which are "shintai" (lit., god-substance). Hot-spring water flows over the rocks and into the stream. Iron oxide in the water is deposited on the rocks, giving them an ocher coloring. Pilgrims enter the shrine grounds barefooted and walk up and around the rocks, the hot water soothing their cold, tired feet and washing off the pollution of this corrupt and impure world (濁世塵土, jōkuse jindo). Standing at the edge of the rocks above the stream and ravine, worshipers offer thanks and prayers. "Yudono" refers to a hot spring bathhouse, which the shrine resembles; the sacred rocks are outdoors, with no formal worship hall. (Shirane, "Narrow Roads" 226, note 79).

13. The cloud peaks collapsing below the summit of Gassan suggest the false peaks of worldly illusions and desires; the mountain and moon appear above the clouds, symbolizing enlightenment.

14. Bashō's verse is subtly ironic. Since pilgrims are forbidden to reveal what takes place at Yudono,



***Right**: Bashō's three commemorative poems on Mt. Haguro, Gassan, and Yudono, on tanzaku (strips of mulberry-paper).* (Yamagata Museum of Art).

oBashō writes, ぬらす袂, nurasu tamoto, translated “weeping” (lit., “sleeves dampened”). The phrase is a cliché from classical poetry, used in the context of the sorrows of love or the sadness of aging, bereavement, nostalgia, etc. Earlier, Bashō uses the phrase “tamoto o nurashinu,” “we wet our sleeves,” to describe his weeping for the two wives of the Satō brothers at Io Temple in Iizuka (15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji).

Commentators suggest that Bashō wept because he was overwhelmed with emotion—awe at the holiness of the shrine, gratitude to the deity, and sadness at departing from the shrine. But “tamoto” also means “edge” or “foot [of a mountain or bridge],” so the phrase also describes the foot of Mt. Yudono, which is wet from the hot spring and stream.

The kanji for “nurasu” (濡) in the phrase “nurasu tamoto” means both “to wet, to soak, to dip” and also “to make love”; thus, Shirane comments that the phrase “echoes the erotic association with love and bathing” (“Narrow Road” 226, note 79). According to Shirane and Kohl, in classical poetry, Mt. Yudono is referred to as “Koi-no-yama, Mountain of Love.” Shirane notes that Yudono’s wet reddish rocks are said “to resemble sexual organs,” another forbidden area of wetness below a hill (mons veneris). The deity at Mt. Haguro is Tamayorihime, “Divine Bride.” A pilgrim is both lover and child, his rebirth taking place at Yudono after austerities and union with the mountain deities. The warm water flowing over the rocks is like amniotic fluid. Shirane concludes that the shrine is “a place of sexuality and fertility,” and a pilgrimage to the Three Mountains of Dewa “represents a rite of passage, a kind of death and rebirth” (“Narrow Road” 226, note 79).

Thus, without revealing any details, Bashō’s verse hints at what he and Sora saw and experienced at Mt. Yudono.

15. Sora’s verse refers to the practice of leaving coins on the path to Yudono, symbolizing giving up materialistic attachments; pilgrims approaching the shrine stepped on the coins left by others.

The inner shrine of Yudono in early autumn: the rocks of worship are downstream, to the far right. Folded white paper streamers (shide) on poles mark the rocks as gods.

31. Sakata

From Mt. Haguro, we walked to the castle town of Tsurugaoka. A samurai named Nagayama Shigeyuki welcomed us into his house, and we composed a sequence of linked verses.[1]

Sakichi accompanied us from Mt. Haguro to see us off.

We boarded a river barge on the way to the port of Sakata, where we lodged at the home of a physician named En'an Fugyoku:[2]

From Mt. Atsumi all the way to Fuku Inlet, evening coolness[3]
あつみ山や吹浦かけて夕すゞみ / *atsumi-yama ya fuku-ura kakete yūsuzumi*

a scorching day, carried to sea by the Mogami River[4]
暑き日を海にいれたり最上川 / *atsuki hi o umi ni iretari mogamigawa*

Notes

1. Nagayama was a student of Bashō's and had visited Bashō in Edo. Bashō and Sora left Mt. Haguro on July 27 (6.10) and walked nine miles west to the castle town of Tsurugaoka (Tsuruoka on modern maps), the capital of Shōnai Domain.

2. En'an (his physician name) Fugyoku (his pen name) was a poet and friend of Bashō's (Sato102, note 239).

   On July 30 (6.13), Bashō and Sora left Tsurugaoka by barge and traveled down the Uchi and Aka Rivers on the way to Sakata. Sakata is at the mouth of the Mogami River, four miles north of the mouth of the Aka River.

"A samurai named Nagayama Shigeyuki welcomed us into his house, and we composed a sequence of linked verses." Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

3. Bashō's verse presents a sweeping view of evening along the coast of the Shōnai Plains, from Mt. Atsumi (温海, Warm Sea, 22 miles south of the Mogami River mouth) to Fuku-ura (吹浦, Windy Inlet, "Fukura" on modern maps, 10 miles north of the mouth). Fukuura is located at the bottom of the western slope of Mt. Chōkai.

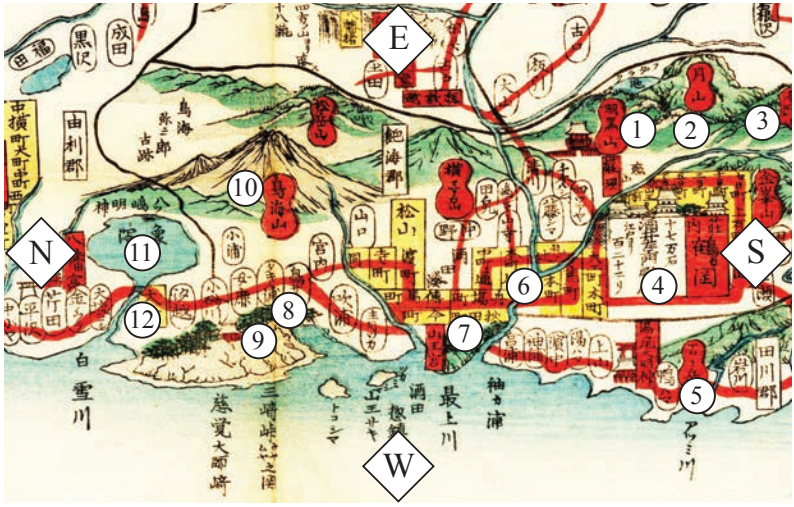
Bashō's first verse started a linked-verse session in which Fugyoku participated. The verse compliments the host by praising the evening coolness over Shōnai (Sato 147, endnote 16; cf. Bashō's use of the summer season-word "coolness" in his verses at Obanazawa and Mt. Haguro). Fugyoku later included Bashō's verse in an anthology, under the heading "View from the Mouth of the River" (Kohl).

***Top**: Looking south toward Hokuriku from the mouth of the Aka River; Mt. Atsumi is in the distance, on the Sea of Japan Coast.*

***Bottom**: From Miyaumi Beach, just north of Sakata, cloud-capped Mt. Chōkai (right). Fuku Inlet is at the bottom of the western slope of the mountain (to the left on the horizon).*

4. Bashō's second verse is a revision of the starter verse for a second renga session, in which Terashima, a wealthy merchant, and six other poets participated (Sato 147, endnote 17). Terashima's house overlooked the mouth of the Mogami River (Shirane 227, note 81). Bashō originally opened the verse with the season-word "coolness" (涼しさ, suzushisa); he later revised the wording to "scorching day/sun" (暑き日, atsuki hi). The verse links back to the one in "29. Mogami River," where the west-flowing river represents the swift passage of time and the dangers of running aground in karmic cycles. The scorching day/sun carried to sea suggests not only the end of a hot day, but also the promise of salvation in the Western Pure Land.

Mogami River on a summer afternoon flowing under a bridge in Sakata.



9. Dewa Province, Mt. Haguro to Kisa Lagoon (1850 Map): (1) Mt. Haguro, (2) Gassan, (3) Mt. Yudono, (4) Tsurugaoka, (5) Mt. Atsumi, (6) Mogami River, (7) Sakata, (8) Fuku Inlet, (9) Misaki and Muyamuya Barrier, (10) Mt. Chōkai, (11) Kisa Lagoon, (12) Shiogoshi.

32. Kisa Lagoon

We saw all the splendid views we'd come so far to see—bays, mountains, rivers, and shores; now I felt an urge to see Kisa Lagoon. Heading north by east from Sakata, we climbed over hills, followed the rocky coast, and trudged along sandy beaches, a distance of about ten li.[1]

As daylight waned, a sea wind whipped up sand, and Mt. Chōkai vanished in a haze of rain; in the dark, we weren't sure where we were going.[2]

It's said a landscape in rain has a mysterious beauty, but the clearing after rain promises to be just as enchanting[3]; we crawled into a cramped "fisherman's shed roofed with rushes" and waited for the rain to let up.[4]

The weather cleared the following morning, and a dazzling sun appeared. We went by boat to Kisa Lagoon, first approaching Nōin's Island to pay homage at the place where the priest secluded himself for three years; then we disembarked on a nearby shore where an old sakura tree remains as a memorial to Priest Saigyō, who wrote "fishing boats row over the flowers."[5]

Near the water's edge was a mausoleum, Empress Jingū's we were told. The temple is called Kanmanju. I've never heard of an imperial journey to this place and wondered what sort of visit it was.[6]

At the temple, we sat in the head priest's room with the bamboo blinds rolled up and saw a perfect landscape framed for a single view: to the south, propping up the heavens, Mt. Chōkai reflected in the lagoon.[7]

West of the mountain, the Muyamuya Barrier restricted travel on the road, which continued to far-off Akita; an embankment had been built along the road's east side; travelers heading north to Akita had to prepare to go across Shiogoshi [Tide Crossing], a shoal where breaking waves entered the lagoon.[8]

On two sides of the temple, Kisa Lagoon extended out about a li.[9] Its face resembled Matsushima's, but had a different expression: Matsushima seemed to smile; Kisakata looked rueful, like a tormented soul whose loneliness was made bleaker by grief:

> Kisa Lagoon: in the rain, Seishi, a sleep-tree flower[10]
> 象潟や雨に西施がねぶの花 / *kisakata ya ame ni seishi ga nebu no hana*

> Shiogoshi: shanks of a crane caressed by the cool sea[11]
> 汐越や鶴はぎぬれて海涼し / *shiokoshi ya tsuru hagi nurete umi suzushi*

About a shrine festival, Sora wrote:

> Kisa Lagoon: at a festival for the gods, what foods are eaten?[12]
> 象潟や料理何くふ神祭 / *kisakata ya ryōri nani kuu kami-matsuri*

Teiji, a merchant from Mino Province, wrote:

> fisherman's house: rain shutters for benches, we enjoy the evening cool[13]
> 蜑の家や戸板を敷て夕涼 / *ama no ya ya toita o shikite yūsuzumi*

Seeing an osprey nest atop a rock, Sora wrote:

> having vowed waves won't wreck their nest—a pair of ospreys[14]
> 波こえぬ契ありてやみさごの巣 / *nami koenu chigiri arite ya misago no su*

Notes

1. Kisa Lagoon (象潟, Kisakata) was 22 miles north of Sakata. With 99 pine-covered islets, the lagoon resembled Matsushima Bay and was famous as a scenic spot in Dewa Province. In 1804, an earthquake raised the land in the area about eight feet, draining the lagoon, and the islets became hummocks (surrounded by rice fields today). Bashō and Sora left Sakata for Kisa Lagoon on August 1 (6.15). Bashō uses 象, the character for elephant, for "kisa"; it's also written 蚶, kisa, or blood clams, which were once abundant in the lagoon (Kohl).

2. A 7,336-foot dormant volcano, Mt. Chōkai lies 10 miles inland between Sakata and the town of Kisakata. The tallest mountain in the region, it's a landmark visible from both towns. It rained heavily on August 1, so Bashō and Sora stopped overnight in Fuku-ura (吹浦, Windy Inlet, Fukura on modern maps), a fishing port halfway between Sakata and Kisakata. (See Map 9, 99.)

3. The rainy landscape reminds Bashō of a poem by Su Shi (1037–1101), "Drinking by the Lake: First under a Clear Sky, Then in Rain." Su describes Lake Xi in

From Kanman Temple, Mt. Chōkai appears beyond the rice fields that were once Kisa Lagoon. Nōin's Island was located around the pine trees to the right.

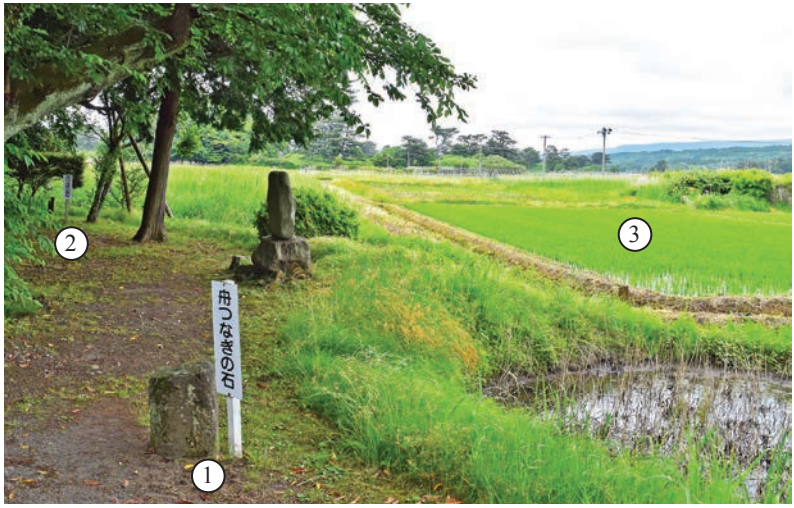
China as beautiful, "shimmering in sunlight or obscured by rain" (Bashō alludes to this poem earlier when describing Matsushima; see "23. Matsushima," note 2.)
d

4. "Fisherman's shed roofed with rushes" (蜑の苫屋, ama no tomaya) is a phrase from an eleventh-century poem by Priest Nōin, who is said to have visited Kisakata: "my life can pass even like this: dwelling in a fisherman's shed roofed with rushes in Kisa Lagoon." (Bashō alludes to Nōin's poetry previously in "11. Shirakawa" and "18. Takekuma.") As Bashō and Sora approached Kisakata after a night in Fukuura, it rained heavily again, so they sheltered in a fisherman's shed (Kohl). Rushes laid in a loose matting over a frame served as a makeshift shelter.

5. Before noon on August 3 (6.17), the weather cleared. Bashō and Sora boarded a boat on a stream that flowed out of the lagoon, past Kumano Shrine. They approached Nōin's Island at the south end of the lagoon. The island was named after the priest who wrote the poem about living in seclusion in Kisa Lagoon. (See note 4 above.). Bashō and Sora then disembarked near Kanmanju Temple, on an island near the lagoon's western shore; a walkway connected the temple to land. On the island's edge was a sakura tree whose blossoms fell into the lagoon; the tree was made famous by a twelfth-century poem by Saigyō: "Kisa Lagoon's sakura blossoms are buried in the waves; fishing boats row over the flowers."

6. Kanmanju Temple was founded by Great Teacher Jikaku of the Tendai sect. Bashō writes its name 干満珠, Kanmanju, "Ebb and Flood Jewels." (On modern maps, it's written 蚶満, Kanman, "Full of Shellfish.")

   A local tradition explains "Ebb and Flood Jewels": the legendary Empress Jingū (169–269 AD) presented the temple with an ebb jewel (干球, kan-ju) and a flood jewel (満球, man-ju) to control the ebb and flood of tides (Kohl). The legend is probably connected to the tides at Shiogoshi [Tide Crossing]. (See note 8 below.) Bashō expresses doubt about the Empress' visit. Her official mausoleum, designated by the Imperial Family, is in Nara.



(1) *A boat-mooring stone at Kanmanju Temple, at the former shore of Kisa Lagoon*; (2) *a sakura tree planted in memory of Saigyō's poem;* (3) *the former lagoon, now rice fields.*

7. “Head priest’s room” is a translation of “hōjō” (方丈), a temple’s main room used for group meditation and instruction. Hōjō were sometimes designed for viewing landscapes or gardens. The word for landscape in Chinese and Japanese art is sansui (山水, mountain and water), so the view of Mt. Chōkai reflected in Kisa Lagoon was ideal.

8. On their way to Sakata, Bashō and Sora passed through the Muyamuya Barrier. In 1830 and 1850 maps of Dewa Province, the barrier is placed at Misaki (Three Capes), due west of Mt. Chōkai, at the north end of the Shōnai Domain near its border with the Honjō Domain. (See Map 9, 99; see also “Barrier Gates and Checkpoints,” 164.)

   An embankment on east side of the road may have been built against flooding from the lagoon.

   Forty miles north of Kisa Lagoon, Akita was a castle town in the Kubota Domain. Just north of Kanmanju Temple, the road crossed the shoal at Shiogoshi, where tides flowed in and out of the lagoon and breaking waves entered it. (See Map. 9, 99; also, the Hiroshige print above depicting waves breaking at Shiogoshi.)

9. From the temple, the lagoon extended two miles northeast and two miles southeast.

10. “Sleep-tree flower” (nebu no hana) is a summer season-word. Its thin pink stamens, radiating from a center, suggest silk threads, hence its English name, “silk tree” (*Albizia julibrissin*). It’s called “sleep tree” in Japan because at night or in rain, its bipinnate leaves droop and close up.

    Bashō’s verse alludes to Su’s verse on the beauty of Lake Xi. (See note 3 above). Su compares the lake to legendary Chinese beauty Seishi (Xi Shi). Bashō recalls not just her beauty, but her tragic life: she left her homeland, the Kingdom of Yue, to seduce the King of Wu and ruin his kingdom in revenge for his humiliation of the King of Yue. In one version

Mt. Chōkai above Kisa Lagoon, with waves breaking at Shiogoshi. Sixty-eight Views of the Various Provinces. Utagawa Hiroshige II (1826–1869).

“Sleep-tree flowers, Ayase River in Tōkyō.” Thirty-six Selected Flowers. Utagawa Hiroshige II (1826–1869).

of her legend, after the fall of Wu, the King of Yue feared that she might seduce others, including himself, so he had her drowned in a river. Like Xi Shi, Bashō also felt regrets about his life. (See "3. Sōka," note 3.)

One commentator suggests that Bashō saw in the delicate rain-wet sleep-tree flowers "eyelashes laden with tears." (Ueda, *Bashō* 256). Bashō's verse recalls the verse at Takadachi by Sora, who imagined the tragic white-haired Kanefusa in the white fourth-moon flowers (25. Hiraizumi).

11. The ever-changing weather of the journey reflects the alternating joy and sadness Bashō feels. To introduce his first verse, he contrasts a smiling Matsushima in clear weather with a rueful Kisakata in the rain. The verse on Kisakata is set on the rainy first day there; the second verse suggests clear, hot weather on the second day: standing in shank-deep water, fishing or simply resting in the cool crossing tide at Shiogoshi, the crane is an auspicious bird associated with longevity. The image recalls Sora's verse at Matsushima: "cuckoo, borrow a crane's body" (23. Matsushima).

12. Kumano Shrine, the guardian shrine of Kisakata and Shiogoshi, was holding a three-day festival from August 1–3. Bashō and Sora ate noodles at the festival on August 2 and watched the festival dancing on August 3 (Kohl).

13. Teiji, a merchant and poet from Mino Province, accompanied Bashō and Sora in Kisakata. Bashō may have met Teiji the previous summer in Mino, where Bashō went to watch cormorant fishing on the Nagara River (Kohl). The Oku narrative ends in Mino Province, in the castle town of Ōgaki (45. Ōgaki).

    "Fisherman's house" recalls Nōin's retreat. (See note 4 above.) The verse contributes to the motif of ever-changing weather: after two days of rain, the weather cleared, so the rain-shutters were taken down and used as benches.

14. In Chinese tradition, ospreys are said to mate for life, symbolizing marital fidelity. Sora's verse recalls the doomed vows of everlasting love at Masshōzan, adding a touch of sadness. (See "21. Sue no Matsuyama," note 2.)

The sea at Shiogoshi: when the land was lower, waves breaking here entered Kisa Lagoon.

33. Echigo Road

Days piled up as we rested in Sakata.[1] I saw the far-off clouds of Hokuriku, and my heart was heavy with apprehension about the long road ahead; it was a hundred and thirty li, I heard, to the capital of Kaga Province.[2]

After we crossed the Nezu Barrier, our pace picked up in Echigo Province, and we reached the Ichiburi Barrier near the Etchū border. During nine days of exertion in the heat and humidity, my spirit felt distressed; I fell ill and didn't write much.[3]

seventh moon: the sixth night, too, isn't an ordinary night[4]
文月や六日も常の夜には似ず / *fumizuki ya muika mo tsune no yo ni wa nizu*

rough seas: the River of Heaven reaching over Sado[5]
荒海や佐渡によこたふ天河 / *araumi ya sado ni yokotau ama no gawa*

Notes

1. Bashō and Sora returned to Sakata from Kisakata on August 4 (6.18) and stayed seven days, until August 11 (6.25). Kisakata was the northernmost stop of the journey. The resolute drive that had carried Bashō from Shirakawa to Kisakata was exhausted. He describes his stay with the word "nagori" (余波)—"waves that remain after the wind has subsided; aftermath." Written with the characters 名残, "nagori" also means "reluctant to part."

   While Bashō paused to rest in Sakata, summer turned to autumn, a season associated with aging and decreasing vigor and vitality. By the traditional Asian solar calendar, August 7 was the first day of autumn; the first moon of autumn began on 7.1, August 16 in 1689.

2. Hokuriku (北陸, North Lands) refers to the region along the Sea of Japan north of Kyōto, the old capital, up to the border of Dewa Province (Yamagata Prefecture). From Sakata, in Dewa, Bashō planned to return south along the Hokuriku coast, through the provinces of Echigo and Etchū, to Kanazawa, the capital of Kaga Province. The distance from Sakata to Kanazawa is about 260 miles. (See Map 11, 163.) Autumnal rain fronts bring clouds and downpours. Bashō's apprehension about the long way to Kanazawa recalls his anxieties at the start of the journey (2. Setting Out; 11. Shirakawa Barrier).

3. Bashō and Sora left Sakata four days after the two-week, end-of-summer "small season" (節季, sekki) called Great Heat (大暑, Taishō), from July 23–August 7, at the beginning of the hottest, most humid time of the year. Bashō estimates they spent nine days on the 170-mile trek from the Nezu Barrier, in Dewa (just north of its border with Echigo), to the Ichiburi Barrier, near Echigo's border

with Etchū. Sora's diary records 14 days: they crossed the Nezu Barrier on August 13 (6.28) and made 10 stops of one or more nights, in Nakamura, Murakami (two nights), Tsuji, Niigata, Yahiko, Izumozaki, Hachizaki, Kuroi, Naoetsu and Takada (four nights), and Nou; they arrived in Ichiburi on August 27 (7.13). On the 10 travel days, they walked between 13 and 22 miles a day. (See "Map of Bashō's *Oku no Hosomichi*," Google Maps, for the locations of the stops.)

The Nezu Barrier memorial, in Nezugaseki, Yamagata, on the Sea of Japan coast south of Tsuruoka.

4. "The sixth night": 7.6, the sixth night of the seventh moon, was the eve of the Tanabata Festival, celebrated on 7.7. The double sevens of the date are considered auspicious. (See "Tanabata Festival," 169–170.) At this time of the year, the Weaving Princess Star (Vega) and the Ox Herder Star (Altair) appear rising at the eastern horizon in the evening, the River of Heaven (Milky Way) between them. In the Tanabata legend, the two stars are lovers separated by the King of Heaven for neglecting their work; they are granted only one meeting a year, on the night of 7.7, but only if the weather is clear and the two stars and starry river are visible.

   Bashō's verse was the starter for a linked-verse session at Izumozaki with eight poets participating. Twenty links were added to Bashō's starter verse, the first link "a single paulownia leaf with dew on it" (Sato 148, endnote 18). "Paulownia leaf" and "dew" are season-words for autumn. Bashō suggested the sixth night as the topic because numerous poems had already been written about 7.7 (Sato 108, note 261). Dozens of Tanabata poems appear in *Collection of 10,000 Leaves*, the first anthology of Japanese poetry (*Man'yōshū*, c. 479–759).

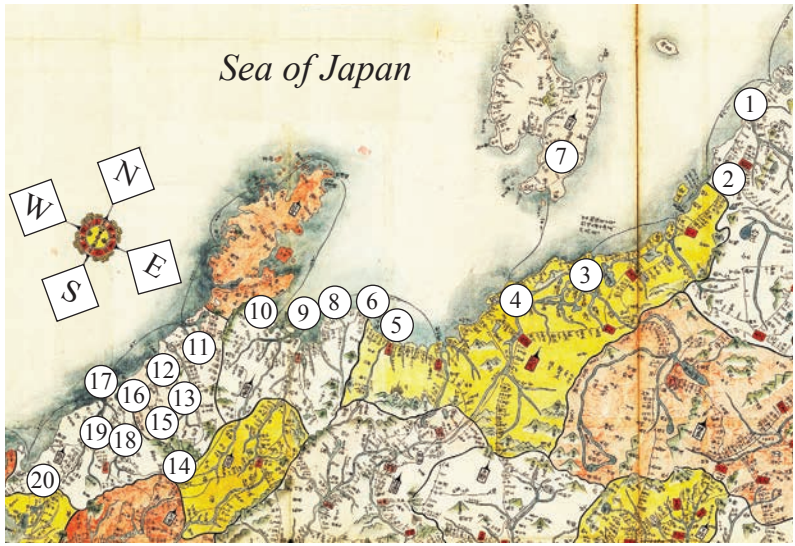
5. Bashō's second verse about the River of Heaven over Sado, describes what might have made 7.6 no ordinary night for him. "Rough seas" and "River of Heaven" are autumn season-words. In "Preface to Silver River," he recalls in prose the evening he spent at Izumozaki:

   > Sado Island is off across the blue waves some eighteen [li], lying sideways thirty-five [li] east to west. . . . The island has yielded great quantities of gold and has been known widely as a jewel of the world, an auspicious island, yet all types of criminals and traitors have been exiled there and now it is a shudderingly fearful place, so unfortunate. I push open my window, hoping to soothe for a time the sorrows of the road. Already the sun has sunk into the sea, and the moon is dim, and the Silver River [River of Heaven] hangs across the heavens, stars glistening in cold clarity. As the sound of waves is carried in from out at sea, my spirit seems slashed, my bowels torn apart, leaving utter desolation. (Barnhill 119)

   The seventh moon was called Fumi-tsuki (文月, Moon of Literary Texts), and one tradition of Tanabata was to write poems expressing hope that clear weather would allow the two star lovers to meet. (See note 4 above.) In his verse, Bashō

expresses hope that the souls of the exiles on Sado (and he, too) might find peace and salvation. “Rough seas” separates them from home; overhead, as if reaching out to the island, the River of Heaven represents the compassion of Kannon, who comforts the suffering, and Amida Buddha, who promises the faithful that they will enter the Western Pure Land after death.

From a beach north of Izumozaki, Sado Island at the horizon.



10. Hokuriku Road (1830 Map). ***Dewa Province***: (1) Sakata, (2) Nezu Barrier. ***Echigo Province***: (3) Niigata, (4) Izumozaki, (5) Oyashirazu, (6) Ichiburi. (7) ***Sado Province***. ***Etchū Province***: (8) Kurobe, (9) Nago Bay, (10) Tako Inlet. ***Kaga Province***: (11) Kanazawa, (12) Komatsu, (13) Nata Temple, (14) Hakusan, (15) Yamanaka, (16) Zenshō Temple. ***Echizen Province***: (17) Yoshizaki Inlet, (18) Eihei Temple, (19) Fukui, (20) Tsuruga.

34. Ichiburi

Today, we crossed the most difficult terrain along the Hokuriku Road, places with names like "Parents Forgotten," "Children Forgotten," "Dogs Turning Back," and "Horses Sent Back."[1] Exhausted, I drew up my pillow and laid down to sleep. From one room away toward the front of the inn, I heard the voices of two young women. An old man's voice joined in, and from what they said, I gathered the women were prostitutes who worked in a town called Niigata, in Echigo.[2] They were on a pilgrimage to Ise Imperial Shrine,[3] and the old man had come as far as the barrier at Ichiburi to see them off.[4]

The women were writing letters that he would take when he returned to their hometown the next day; they also shared with him some incidental messages to relay.

"On 'a beach where waves break,' our bodies abandoned . . . fallen into the shameful world of 'fishermen's daughters' . . . fickle promises and fleeting relationships . . . day after day our karma somehow ill-fated"[5]—I heard them talk about such matters as I fell asleep.

The next morning when Sora and I were about to set off, the women approached us and said, "Regretfully, we're distressed and doubtful about the journey ahead because we don't know the way. May we trail behind you, at a distance, keeping you just in sight? Please bestow on us the blessing of your great compassion, as befits your priestly clothing, and grant us the protection of Buddha." Tears fell as they spoke.

"I wish we could be of help, but we'll be stopping and staying at numerous places along the way. Entrust your journey to lay travelers. The divine protection of the Shining Kami will undoubtedly keep you safe."[6] This said, we left them behind. For some time afterwards, a sadness persisted.

one house: prostitutes sleep here, too; bush clovers and moon[7]
一家に遊女もねたり萩と月 / *hitotsu-ya ni yūjo mo netari hagi to tsuki*

I recited this verse, and Sora recorded it.

Notes

1. On the Hokuriku Road between Nou and Ichiburi, the mountains drop steeply into the sea and place names suggests danger—Oyashirazu ("Parents Forgotten"), Koshirazu ("Children Forgotten"), Inumodori ("Dogs Turning Back"), and Komagaeshi ("Horses Sent Back"). A sign today at Oyashirazu Beach Park

explains the origin of the names "Parents Forgotten" and "Children Forgotten": "due to the rough seas along the coast, parents couldn't watch out for their children, and children couldn't watch out for their parents—they had to watch out for themselves." The sign adds that in the early eleventh century, a mother lost her only infant to high waves, and composed a poem: "Beyond the knowledge of the parent, the infant disappeared like a sea-bubble at Koshiji."

As elsewhere in the narrative, the landscape is symbolic, here suggesting a world of sorrows. The place names "Parents Forgotten" and "Children Forgotten" foreshadow the story of the two prostitutes (yūjo, 遊女, play-girls) staying at the same inn as Bashō and Sora. The women have been cast off by their parents, who contracted them to work in a brothel.

"Oyashirazu, Echigo": travelers on the shore below the cliffs. Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

On Route 8, looking south toward Ichiburi: the coastal cliffs near Oyashirazu.

2. Niigata was a post town on the Hokuriku Road, about a 100 miles northeast of Ichiburi. (See Map 10, 107.) The town was a busy port known for its entertainment district and brothels. Bashō and Sora stayed overnight there on the way to Ichiburi. (See "33. Echigo Road," note 3.)

3. Ise Jingū (Imperial Shrine), dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu (see note 6 below), was the most popular pilgrimage destination in Japan during the Edo Period (1603–1868). According to Kohl, prostitutes from Echigo "regularly made the trip."

4. Ichiburi was a barrier-gate town at the western end of Echigo Province, near its border with Etchū Province. The gate was a checkpoint for travelers entering and leaving Echigo. (See "Barrier Gates and Checkpoints," 164.) Sora and Bashō arrived in Ichiburi on August 27 (7.12) and departed the next day.

5. Bashō uses figurative language from an eleventh-century poem to describe the lives of the two prostitutes (Sato 110, note 265). Waves breaking is a metaphor for having sex; "fishermen's daughters" is a euphemism for prostitutes. During the Heian Period (794–1185), yūjo (play-girls) included itinerant entertainers

who went on boats to "fish," that is, sing while offering sexual services to customers on ships (Kawashima 31). "Fickle promises and fleeting relationships" is a translation of "sadamenaki chigiri" (定めなき契); "chigiri" means both "promises" and "sexual relations."

6. The "Shining Kami" (神明, Shinmei) is Amaterasu, the Shintō sun goddess and ancestress of the Imperial Family worshiped at Ise Imperial Shrine. That the prostitutes were going to pray to Amaterasu, a fertility goddess, is ironic.

   Ise Imperial Shrine is about 200 miles from Ichiburi, on the Pacific Ocean side of Honshu, hence the anxiety of the two women about finding their way there.

7. "Bush clover" (hagi) is an autumn season-word. Its transient bloom on drooping branches suggests the fallen world where humans suffer from illusory desires. The gist of Bashō's verse is that the prostitutes are caught in the karmic cycles of the fallen world; but Bashō also sees the similarity between his homelessness on the road and the homelessness of the prostitutes; here in Ichiburi, they share the same inn. The verse about prostitutes from which Bashō quotes (see note 2) includes the line "yado mo sadamezu," "lodging is transient." Like travelers, itinerant entertainers/prostitutes prayed to Dōsojin (Guardian Gods of the Road), in the form of a god called Hyakudayū (Kawashima 31; on Dōsojin, see "1. Before Departure," note 5.)

   "Moon" is another season-word for autumn. A passage from *The Tale of the Heike* describes the moon's Buddhist symbolism:

   > [T]he moon of divine responsiveness shone cloudless on the riverbank where the Lotus Sutra was studied; no dew of false thought settled in the courtyard where the sins of the six sense organs were repented. There was promise everywhere of hope for the life to come. (McCullough 347)

   Bashō suggests that the moon's divine responsiveness shines on the inn shared

A torii (gateway) inside Ise Imperial Shrine, home of the sun goddess, Amaterasu.

by pilgrims and prostitutes. The moon at Ichiburi recalls the sun at Nikkō, at the start of the journey ("oh so glorious! sunlight on green leaves, young leaves") when Bashō praised the blessings of the buddhas and kami on the four Confucian social classes—scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants, all living in harmony (6. Nikkō). Here at Ichiburi, under the compassionate light of Amida and Kannon, Bashō includes prostitutes and pilgrims, who live at the margins of society. In his earlier verse on Sado Island, under the light of the River of Heaven, he includes criminals and traitors (33. Echigo). During the second half of his journey/narrative, images of moonlight and starlight in night poems replace images of sunlight and gold as symbols of Buddhist blessings.

***Top**: Two prostitutes and their companion at the inn at Ichiburi.* Yosa Buson (1716–1784).
***Bottom**: Hagi blooming in autumn, petals scattered on the ground.*

35. Kurobe

Kurobe is said to have forty-eight rapids; we lost count of how many we crossed before arriving at Nago Bay.[1]

The wisteria waves at Tako appear in the spring, but I thought we should go there anyway, for the early autumn pathos.[2]

I asked a man for directions and he told us, "From here, follow the shore for about five li until you get to the far side of that mountain over there; but you'll find only some makeshift sheds used by fishermen, and no one to rent you lodging for even a one-night stay."[3]

Deterred by what he said, we continued on to Kaga Province.[4]

we pushed through the fragrance of early-ripening rice; on the right, the Sea of Rough Shores[5]
わせの香や分入右は有磯海 / *wase no ka ya wake-iru migi wa ariso umi*

Notes

1. On August 28 (7.13), Bashō and Sora left Ichiburi, entered Etchū Province, and crossed the Kurobe River, which "divides into many distributaries" as it flows north into the Sea of Japan from the Tateyama Mountain; "forty-eight" is used to suggest "many" (Sato 112, note 270). Nago Bay is called Toyama Bay today. (See Map 10, 107.) After walking 24 miles from Ichiburi, the travelers spent the night in Namerikawa, a town on the east side of Nago Bay.

Kurobe River pouring out of Kurobe Gorge toward the Sea of Japan.

Looking west from Namerikawa at Mt. Nijo across Nago Bay.

2. Tako was an inlet (Tako no Ura, 多胡の浦) on the west side of Nago Bay. Four poems in Book XIX of *Collection of 10,000 Leaves* (*Man'yōshū,* the first anthology of Japanese poetry*,* c. 479–759) made the inlet famous for its springtime bloom of wisteria (藤, fuji). Poem 4199 reads, "Wisteria waves [藤浪, fuji-nami] are mirrored on the surface, but the sea bottom is clear, and I see submerged stones that look like jewels." (Wisteria is a deciduous woody vine that climbs or spreads; clusters of bluish purple blossoms hanging from its branches suggest the crests of breaking waves.) Poem 4201 reads: "I thought little about coming here, but seeing the wisteria blooming at Tako Inlet, I'll spend one night."

3. "That mountain" is Mt. Nijo (二上, Twin Peaks), a landmark on the west side of Nago Bay. Tako Inlet was a couple of miles north of the mountain. Bashō uses the term "toma-buki" (苫ぶき, roofed with rushes) to refer to the makeshift sheds of fishermen. (See "32. Kisa Lagoon," note 4.)

   Today, what was once Tako Inlet is reclaimed land, with rice fields, houses, waterways and reservoirs, and a shrine named Tako Ura Fujinami (田子浦藤浪, Tako Inlet Wisteria-waves) located about two miles northwest of Mt. Nijo.

4. On August 29 (7.14), instead of venturing north for an overnight stay in a makeshift shed on the wind-swept, wave-beaten shores of Nago Bay, Bashō and Sora stopped for the night in Takaoka, a former castle town just south of Mt. Nijo, then continued on to Kaga Province the next day (Kohl). Bashō was exhausted after the long trek from Sakata and not feeling well because of the heat. Kanazawa was the capital of Kaga, reputedly the wealthiest province in the nation during the Edo Period; it offered the comfort of an inn.

5. "Sea of Rough Shores" (有磯海, Ari-iso-umi) is a poetic name for the sea along Nago Bay and the sea off the coast of Etchū Province. Kohl points out that originally the name was written 荒磯海, Ara-iso-umi, "Sea of Wind-Swept, Wave-Beaten Shores." Heading west from Namerikawa to Takaoka, with Nago Bay on the right, Bashō and Sora walked 17 miles through coastal rice fields.

36. Kanazawa

After going over the pass at Mount Unohana and down Kurikara Valley, we arrived in Kanazawa; it was the day of the first full moon of autumn.[1] We lodged at the same inn as Kasho, a merchant who came here regularly from Ōsaka.[2]

I had heard a little about a devoted local poet, Isshō, whose fame had spread.[3] I learned now that he had passed away last winter. His elder brother held a memorial service for him.[4]

grave-mound, grieve, too—my crying voice is the autumn wind
塚も動け我泣声は秋の風 / *tsuka mo ugoke waga naku koe wa aki no kaze*

Invited to a thatched retreat:

autumn, refreshingly cool—all hands, let's peel the melons and eggplants[5]
秋涼し手毎にむけや瓜茄子 / *aki suzushi tegoto ni muke ya uri nasubi*

Composed on the road:

red red sun, still hard on us, even with an autumn breeze[6]
あかあかと日は難面もあきの風 / *akaaka to hi wa tsurenaku mo aki no kaze*

Notes

1. The day of the first full moon of autumn (7.15) was August 30 in 1689. Sora records that he and Bashō left Takaoka in clear weather and arrived in Kanazawa (27 miles away) in the afternoon. On the way, they stopped to worship at Hanyū Hachiman Imperial Shrine (Hanyū Gokoku Hachimangū), then went over Kurikara Mountain Pass at the Etchū and Kaga border. They went past Mt. Unohana as they approached the border, then down Kurikara Valley in Kaga.

   Kurikara Valley was a battle site during the Gempei War (1180–1185). In a surprise attack at nightfall, the 40,000-strong Genji samurai led by Minamoto no Yoshinaka slaughtered a Heike force of 70,000 after driving them over a cliff (McCullough, *Tale* 230–231). Before the battle, Yoshinaka prayed for victory at Hanyū Hachimangū. (On the deity Hachiman, see "8. Kurobane," note 3; for notes on Bashō's affinity for Yoshinaka, see "Bashō's Life," 155–156.)

   Kanazawa, the capital of Kaga Province, was a prosperous town with a population of about 50,000. (See Map 10, 107.) Poetry and other arts flourished, supported by the Maeda family, which ruled the province from Kanazawa Castle. Bashō and Sora spent nine days in Kanazawa, until September 8.

2. Kasho was a poet and follower of Bashō's linked-verse (renga) school. (Barnhill 166, note 127; see "Renga and Haikai," 156.)

3. Isshō, a tea merchant, was also a poet and follower of Bashō's school. Bashō had corresponded with him and was looking forward to meeting him in Kanazawa (Kohl).

4. Isshō (1652–1688) passed away at age 36. Bashō arrived in Kanazawa on the last day of Obon, the annual festival of the dead, when families invite the spirits of departed members back to their hometowns to be honored, fed favorite foods, and entertained with music and dance before returning to the afterworld by the

***Top**: From Kurikawa Mountain Pass, looking east down Kurikara Valley toward Kanazawa.*
***Bottom**:Otemon (Main Gate) of Kanazawa Castle.*

light of the full moon and sending-off fires and lanterns. Memorial services are also held. On September 6 (7.22), Bashō and Sora went to a memorial service for Isshō, a pen name that means "One Laugh" or "One Smile," ironically suggesting the brevity of his life. The name recalls the opening of "25. Hiraizumi": "The glory of three Fujiwara generations passed, as if in a single night's sleep."

5. On September 4 (7.20), Bashō and Sora were invited to an evening meal at a hermitage on the Saikawa River, on the southwest side of Kanazawa. Bashō led a linked-verse session, with his "autumn, refreshingly cool" verse as the starter (Kohl). Buddhist meals are vegetarian. Melons and eggplants mature in the late summer and autumn. Kohl notes that Bashō was once "irritated by all the special treatment he received and said he would rather go hungry than be treated with special favors"; here, he suggests that everyone help with preparing dinner.

6. The red sun and autumn breeze represent the transitional weather of early autumn. Shirane describes this period in meteorological terms: "At the start of fall, the Ogasawara high-pressure system begins to retreat to the south and the cool winds from the continent start to arrive, but the atmosphere remains hot—a long lingering summer—until the third week of August" (*Four Seasons* 11).

   Sora records that August 28 to 30 (7.13 to 7.15) were extremely hot; on the day before they arrived in Kanazawa (7.14), he notes, "The master does not feel well. It was very hot" (Kohl).

   The gist of Bashō's poem is that although it was now halfway through the first moon of autumn, the sun's heat was still brutally debilitating. The red-hot sun suggests the relentless hardship of a long pilgrimage. Kohl speculates that "red, red sun" refers to "the red setting sun"; if so, as a symbol of the end of life, the setting sun recalls Isshō's death. "Autumn breeze (wind)" also signifies the changing seasons and the passage of time; as the wind grows increasingly cold as autumn deepens, it's also, like the sun, time, and death, "tsurenaku" (hard-hearted, unkind).

Uri (melons).

37. Tada Shrine

At a place called Komatsu [Small Pines]:

a modest name, Small Pines: windblown bush clover, pampas grass[1]
しほらしき名や小松吹萩すゝき / *shio-rashiki na ya komatsu fuku hagi susuki*

We visited Tada Shrine, where a helmet and a piece of brocade once belonging to Sanemori are kept. Long ago, when Sanemori served the Genji, Lord Yoshitomo gave him both as gifts. Indeed, they weren't made for a low-ranking samurai. On the hoe-shaped horns affixed to the front of the helmet was an engraving of chrysanthemums and interlaced vines inlaid with gold, from the visor to the folded-back ends of the neck guard.[2]

After Sanemori was killed in battle, Kiso Yoshinaka presented the helmet and brocade to this shrine, with a prayer attached. Higuchi no Jirō was the envoy. The shrine records brought these events before my eyes.[3]

heartless: under the helmet, a cricket[4]
むざんやな甲の下のきりぎりす / *muzan ya na kabuto no shita no kirigirisu*

Notes

1. On September 8 (7.24) Bashō and Sora left Kanazawa for Komatsu, 16 miles to the southwest. (See Map 10, 107.) Bush clover and pampas grass are two of the Seven Grasses of Autumn. (See the screen painting on p. 159.) "Wind-blown" suggests the passage of time and the increasing harshness of the weather. This verse and the one that follows served as starters for linked-verse sessions in Komatsu (Sato 149–150, endnotes 21 and 22).

2. See the photo of Sanemori's helmet on page 119. The chrysanthemum and interlaced vines (karakusa, Chinese grass) symbolize longevity and prosperity. "Chrysanthemum" is an autumn season-word. (See "39. Yamanaka," note 2.)

3. Bashō visited Tada Shrine on September 9 (7.25). The verse on Sanemori's helmet serves as the climax to his reflections on the vanity of war. Saitō no Bettō Sanemori (1111–1183) first served Lord Minamoto no Yoshitomo (1123–1160), head of the northern Genji, but later switched sides, joining the Heike against the Genji. A native of Echizen (northern Fukui Province), Sanemori rode into battle when he was 72, intent on dying a warrior's death. He dyed his white hair black so he wouldn't suffer the humiliation of being dismissed as an over-the-hill warrior by a younger opponent. Sanemori was slain and beheaded by

Susuki (pampas grass) flowering in autumn. For a photo of flowering hagi, see "34. Ichiburi."

Tezuka no Tarō Mitsumori at the battle of Shinohara, seven miles southwest of Tada Shrine. The battle took place after the Heike defeat at Kurikara Valley. (See "Kanazawa," note 1.)

Genji samurai Higuchi no Jirō Kanemitsu, who had known Sanemori for a long time, identified the head and cried out, "Ana muzan ya" ("How heartless!") *The Tale of Heike* narrator adds, "How pitiful that his empty name alone should have survived, impervious to corporeal decay, while his mortal remains have become one with the northern soil!" (McCullough 234–235). Bashō's verse echoes Kanemitsu's cry (muzan ya), as the poet imagines the severed head of the aged warrior, its white hair dyed black, and hears a cricket beneath the helmet that once protected that head. White-haired Sanemori recalls the white-haired warrior Kanefusa, who died at Takadachi and whose ghost appears to Sora in the fourth-moon flowers (25. Hiraizumi).

Saitō no Bettō Sanemori, white hair dyed black, outdueled by Tezuka Tarō Mitsumori. Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839–1892).

4. "Cricket" is an autumn season-word; like cicadas (see "18. Ryūshaku Temple," note 2), crickets are short-

lived. Hatched in late spring, they mature by late summer. In hot weather, males chirp fiercely to frighten off rivals and attract females for mating. As the weather turns colder in autumn, crickets get weaker and die. The twelfth-century poet Saigyō wrote, "As autumn nights grow old, the cricket seems to weaken, its voice fading into the distance" (qtd. in Shirane, "Narrow Road" 231).

A world in which a cricket replaces the head of a heroic warrior under his cherished helmet is heartless ("muzan," also translated "cruel," "merciless," "horrible," "pitiful"). But the cricket, like the warrior, is a transient being, soon to suffer its own death. A commentator's note about Bashō's summer grasses verse at Hiraizumi also applies to this verse: "a contrast between insentient nature and fragile human existence is condensed into this poem" (Ueda, *Bashō* 243).

***Top**: Tada Shrine. **Bottom**: Sanemori's Helmet* (explorekomatsu.com).

38. Nata

As we walked toward Yamanaka Hot Springs, Mt. Shirane was visible behind us.[1]

In the foothills to the left was a hall for Kannon worship. After becoming a monk and completing a pilgrimage to thirty-three temples, the ex-Emperor Kazan enshrined a statue of the All-Loving, All-Compassionate One here and named the place Na-Ta, which combines the first syllables of Nachi and Tanigumi temples.[2] With old pines growing along a ridge of oddly shaped crags and a small thatched worship hall atop one of the crags, the site is exceptional:

whiter than Ishiyama's stones—autumn wind[3]
石山の石より白し秋の風 / *ishiyama no ishi yori shiroshi aki no kaze*

Notes

1. Mt. Shirane (白根が嶽, Mt. White Root) rises 8,865 feet where Kaga, Echizen, and Mino provinces meet. (See Map 10, 107.) The tallest mountain in the region and known today as Hakusan (白山, White Mountain), it's revered, along with Mt. Fuji and Tateyama, as one of the Three Sacred Mountains of Japan.

2. Nata Temple is in a small valley six miles south of Komatsu. The founder of the first temple here was Taichō (b. 682), a legendary mountain ascetic who climbed

Mt. Shirane (Hakusan) is visible over the left shoulder on the way from Komatsu to Natadera.

Nata: "In the foothills to the left was a hall for Kannon worship."

Mt. Shirane in 717 and had a vision of its goddess, Kuzuryū Gongen (Nine-headed Dragon Goddess), emerging from a summit lake and transforming into the bodhisattva Kannon. He enshrined an image of the eleven-headed, thousand-armed Kannon in a cave where Natadera (Nata Temple) is located today; he named the site Iwaya-dera (Cliff-Cave Temple).

The retired Emperor Kazan (968–1008) renamed the temple Nata after completing a pilgrimage to 33 Kannon temples in Kinki (the region around the capital of Kyōto). This temple circuit was established around 718. The first stop was Nachi Temple in Kii Province (Wakayama Prefecture); the last stop was Tanigumi Temple, in Mino (Gifu Prefecture). Kazan combined the first syllables of Nachi and Tanigumi to form Na-Ta because he believed the site combined the spiritual power of all 33 Kannon temples, and pilgrims might worship at only Nata instead of trekking to 33 temples.

Today, Natadera is dedicated to world peace and natural harmony. Its spiritual aura is intense. Visitors can enter a womb-like chamber dug into the cliff to light a candle, wash away the impurities of life, offer prayers, and be symbolically reborn.

3. "White" in Bashō's verse connects Natadera to Mt. Shirane (White Root), the source of the temple's divine power. In Daoist tradition, the color white is associated with autumn and death. In a verse composed in the winter of 1685, Bashō uses the color white to express sabishisa, loneliness in a fleeting world, an emotion rooted in the Buddhist view of life and a valued aesthetic quality of Zen poetry and art: "sea darkens: wild duck's voice, faintly white" (*umi kure te kamo no koe honoka ni shiroshi*).

   As if to attest to Kazan's notion that Nata Temple was superior to the other 33 Kannon temples, Bashō's verse compares the stones at Natadera to the stones at the famous temple at Ishiyama (Stone Mountain), the thirteenth temple of the Kinki Kannon pilgrimage. Located in the hills south of Lake Biwa, Ishiyama was famous for its autumn beauty. The temple is included in "Eight Views of Omi Province," celebrated since the fifteenth century in poetry and art. Conventionally, Ishiyama's

pale stones are depicted under a full moon in autumn. (See the Hiroshige print below.) Bashō's verse declares that Natadera's stones in the autumn wind are "whiter" (i.e., evoke more sabishisa) than Ishiyama's stones in moonlight.

Shirane comments, "Instead of reaffirming the classical culture of the capital [Kyōto], the provinces have become [for Bashō] a wellspring of poetic sensibility, a new carrier of cultural memory, that could match, if not supersede, that of the classical and medieval past" (*Traces* 245).

***Top**: Stones at Ishiyama Temple.*

***Bottom**: "Autumn moon at Ishiyama Temple."* Eight Views of Omi Province. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

39. Yamanaka

We bathed at Yamanaka Hot Springs, whose merits, it's said, are second only to Arima.[1]

Yamanaka: no need to break off chrysanthemums for its redolent waters[2]
山中や菊はたおらぬ湯の匂 / *yamanaka ya kiku wa taoranu yu no nioi*

Kumenosuke, the proprietor of the inn, was still a youth.[3] His father had been devoted to haikai poetry. In the past, an aspiring young poet named Teishitsu came here from Kyōto and was shamed by the father's refined verses. When Teishitsu returned to the capital, he studied haikai under Teitoku and gradually became well known. But it's said that after achieving recognition as a master, Teishitsu wouldn't accept fees for judging poetry in this village. Now, of course, it's a story of a bygone generation.[4]

Sora suffered from a stomach ailment and left to recuperate with relatives in Nagashima, Ise Province. Before departing, he left this verse:

walking on and on, even if I fall facedown, it'll be in a field of hagi[5]
行行てたふれ伏とも萩の原 / *yuki yukite taore fusu tomo hagi no hara*

The one departing is sorrowful; the one left behind, regretful, a duck separated from its companion, lost among the clouds.[6] I wrote in response to Sora's verse:

from today: our pledges canceled, bamboo hat's dew[7]
今日よりや書付消さん笠の露 / *kyō yori ya kaitsuke kesan kasa no tsuyu*

Notes

1. Yamanaka Hot Springs is located at Kakusenkei Gorge on the Daishōji River, about 12 miles southwest of Komatsu. (See Map 10, 107). Hot springs were visited for restoring physical and spiritual health. (See "30. Three Mountains of Dewa," note 13.) Bashō and Sora spent a week at Yamanaka, from September 11–19, to recuperate from the hardships of travel

   The highly regarded Arima Hot Springs is in the mountains above Kobe, near Ōsaka.

   Yamanaka Hot Springs was discovered by the famous monk Gyōgi (668–749), whom Bashō mentions earlier in "12. Sukagawa" (See note 7.) Gyōgi dug for the hot spring in a spot indicated by Yakushi, the buddha of medicine and healing. Later, during the Heian Period (794–1185), Hasebe Nobutsura, Lord of Noto

Province, is said to have rediscovered the hot spring after seeing a wounded white heron bathing an injured leg in the stream. He built 12 inns nearby for travelers who came to bathe in its healing waters.

2. "Chrysanthemum" is an autumn season-word. The perennial flower was believed to embody the life-force of the sun: its roundness (petals radiating from a center) resembles the sun, and it's hardy enough to withstand cold weather.

With the verb "break," Bashō's verse perhaps alludes to the following poem in the tenth-century *Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems* (*Kokinshū*): "Let me break off this chrysanthemum, still wet with dew, and place it in my hair, so that never-aging autumn lingers on" (*tsuyu nagara / orite kazasamu / kiku no hana / oisenu aki no / hisashikarubeku*). Bashō suggests in his verse that the hot-spring water was so invigorating that he didn't need to break off a chrysanthemum for longevity. Besides being worn in the hair, chrysanthemums were customarily infused in bathwater and saké to fortify the body and spirit during the Chrysanthemum Festival. (See "Chrysanthemum Festival," 170.)

Hot-spring water is redolent because of its mineral content, which contributes to the salutary effects of bathing. The water at Yamanaka contains calcium, sodium, and sulfate and is said to relieve aching muscles, fatigue, and digestive problems. In a short prose piece, Bashō describes the positive results of his hot-spring visit:

> Certainly, as I bathed often, my skin and flesh were moisturized, muscles and bones softened, heart and mind relaxed, and I truly felt my complexion revived. I did not care whether the boat to the earthly paradise or the marker for Tz'u-t'ung's chrysanthemums was lost. (Sato 150–151, endnote 23)

Tz'u-t'ung was a boy who "lived in exile for seven hundred years while drinking only dew from chrysanthemums" (Sato 118, note 301). In autumn 1687, Bashō

Chrysanthemums and honey bee. Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849).

composed a verse alluding to the legendary chrysanthemum's dew: "as autumn passes, even a butterfly drinks the chrysanthemum's dew" (*aki o hete chō mo nameru ya kiku no tsuyu*).

3. The inn where Bashō and Sora stayed was Izumiya. Kumenosuke was 14 years old at the time of their visit. The young innkeeper was head of the family because his father had passed away 10 years earlier, in 1679. Kumenosuke was an aspiring poet; he became Bashō's student and took the pen name Tōyō (Kohl).

4. Teishitsu (1610–1673) was famous as one of the "seven haikai saints" of the Teimon school, founded by Teitoku (1571–1653) (Sato 118, note 304). Bashō had been "a devotee of the Teimon style of haikai" when he frequented Kyōto before moving to Edo (Shirane, *Traces* 18).

5. In contrast to Bashō, who was reinvigorated at the hot spring, Sora was still ailing. In his verse, he imagines himself falling or dying on his way home to recuperate. Hagi, or bush clover, bloom and then scatter their petals in autumn, another symbol of fleeting human lives. (See note 7 and the photo of flowering hagi in "34. Ichiburi.")

6. Bashō alludes to a farewell poem by Han Chinese statesman Su Wu (140–60 BC). The poem was composed when Su parted with his old friend, General Li Ling (d. 74 BC): "Two wild ducks flew north together; one alone now soars southward" (Sato 120, note 306). Sora, like Su, was returning home. Bashō, like Li, remained behind, a companionless duck "lost among the clouds."

   Su and Li were captives of the Xiongnu, a nomadic people of Central Asia. Su was sent there as an ambassador in 100 BC. When he refused to serve the Xiongnu ruler, he was sent to herd sheep at Lake Baikal for 19 years. In 99 BC, Li led an invasion against the Xiongnu, but surrendered after his soldiers were surrounded and slaughtered.

   Eventually, during a period of détente, Su was allowed to return south to Han China; Li remained behind with the Xiongnu. Li was too ashamed and embittered to go back home because he had been condemned as a traitor for surrendering, then falsely accused of switching sides, which resulted in his family being killed.

   At Su's departure, Li composed a poem expressing his regret about not being

"*Sora suffered from a stomach ailment and left to recuperate."* Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

able to accompany his friend home: “The good times will never come back again: / In a moment,—our parting will be over. . . . I wish I could ride on the wings of the morning wind, / And go with you right to your journey’s end” (trans. by Arthur Waley).

Like Li, Bashō regretted that he and Sora had to part, but Bashō was committed to the life of a wandering poet. Like Li, Bashō also had regrets about both his life back home and his life on the road. After his journey to Oku, he lamented, “As I reflect at length about the months and years that have drifted by, I realize the mistakes a bungling person like myself has made. . . . I’ve tormented my body wandering like a windblown cloud that arrives nowhere, struggling to express feelings in poetry about birds and flowers” (“Account of the Dwelling-in-Illusion Retreat”).

7. Pilgrims wrote pledges on their kasa (broad-brimmed woven hats). In 1687, before traveling to view cherry blossoms at Yoshino, Bashō and his companion, Tokoku, scribbled playfully on their hats the traditional phrases of pilgrims, “in heaven and on earth, no home, two on the same journey,” 乾坤無住　同行二人, kenkon mujū dōgyō ninin *Notes from a Travel Pack* (*Oi no Kobumi*). Bashō and Sora may have inked something similar on their kasa for the journey to Oku. “Two on the same path” refers to a solitary pilgrim traveling with Buddha or with the spirit of the pilgrim-priest Kōbō Daishi (also known as Kūkai; see “6. Nikkō, note 2); but the phrase may also refer to Bashō and Sora, who pledged to travel together on the pilgrimage to Oku.

Kasa (pilgrim’s hat) woven from bamboo, with pledges written on the brim. Wikipedia Commons.

“Dew” is an autumn season-word; “pledges canceled” suggests that words and companionship, like dew, are ephemeral.

40. Zenshō Temple

Outside the castle town of Daishōji, I stopped at Zenshō Temple, still in Kaga Province.[1] Sora stayed here the night before and left behind a verse:

all night long, I heard the autumn wind at a back-country hill[2]
終宵秋風聞やうらの山 / *yo mo sugara akikaze kiku ya ura no yama*

One night's separation is like being a thousand li apart.[3] Lying in the dormitory, I heard the autumn wind, too, and as the sky brightened toward dawn, sutra chanting, voices clear. When the gong for the morning meal sounded, I went to the refectory.

Today, my heart was set on crossing into Echizen Province, so I hurried to end my stay. As I came down from the dining hall, young monks with paper and inkstone caught up with me at the bottom of the stairs. At the time, the garden willow tree was shedding leaves.

before departing, I'll sweep the garden: at the temple, a willow scattering leaves[4]
庭掃て出ばや寺に散柳 / *niwa haite ideba ya tera ni chiru yanagi*

My straw sandals already on, I hastily finished this impromptu verse.

Notes

1. Zenshō was the temple of the family that owned Izumiya, the inn where Bashō and Sora stayed at Yamanaka Hot Springs; the head priest was an uncle of the young innkeeper (Kohl). The temple in Kaga Province was near the border with Echizen. (See Map 10, 107). Sora arrived at the temple on September 19 (8.5) and left on September 21 (8.7); Bashō arrived on the 21st from Komatsu, where he had returned after his stay at Yamanaka.

2. "Ura no yama," "back-country hill": "ura" refers to the backside (Sea of Japan side) of northern Honshu, an area considered remote, that is, far from the ancient capital of Kyōto. The verse recalls a passage by the anonymous author of *An Account of a Journey to the East* (c. 1242) about another back-country temple on the eastern shore of Lake Biwa near Kagami: "Overtaken by darkness on the road, I lodged near a mountain temple called Musadera. As the night advanced, the autumn wind from Tono [Hill] chilled me to the bone in the makeshift bed, and I suddenly felt worlds removed from the capital" (McCullough, *Japanese Prose* 424).

3. Bashō alludes to a farewell poem by General Li Ling (d. 74 BC) presented to Statesman Su Wu: "Drifting clouds, each day a thousand miles—how can you know the sorrow in my heart?" (Sato 120, note 308). Li's poem was in response to the poem by Su to which Bashō alludes in the previous section, "Two wild ducks flew north together. . . ." (See "39. Yamanaka," note 6.)

4. Before departure, travelers who lodge at temples customarily help the monks with chores like sweeping leaves. In Bashō's verse, "scattering leaves" alludes to the name of autumn's second moon, Ha-zuki (葉月, Moon of Leaves), which is a shortened form of Ha-ochi-zuki (葉落ち月, Moon of Falling Leaves). (See "Lunar Calendar and the Four Seasons," 166.)

   The image of the willow tree scattering leaves links this verse to Sora's verse about the autumn wind and also recalls the leafy summer willow tree at Ashino under which Bashō stopped for shade and rest at the start of the journey (10. Sesshōseki and Ashino). After Sora's departure, the willow shedding leaves makes Bashō feel even more deeply the pathos of time passing.

Zenshō Temple today, with a willow tree (to the left) in its garden.

41. Shiogoshi Pines

In a boat poled across Yoshizaki Inlet, I entered Echizen Province on my way to see the Shiogoshi Pines.[1]

all night long, storm-driven waves battering the coast; droplets of moonlight in the Shiogoshi Pines

In this verse, Saigyō exhausted all views; adding another word would be like attaching a useless finger.[2]

At Tenryū Temple in Matsuoka, I sought out the head priest, an old acquaintance.[3] Hokushi, who accompanied me from Kanazawa to see me off, ended up coming all the way here. He wrote continuously, not letting any of the scenic views pass without consideration; and occasionally, his compositions were well conceived and moving.[4] Now we were about to part:

a fan written on, then torn in two—backwash of time[5]
物書て扇引さく余波哉 / *mono kaite ōgi hikisaku nagori kana*

From Tenryū Temple, I went four miles into the mountains to worship at Eiheiji, the temple of Zen Master Dōgen. For noble reasons, he left his traces "a thousand li from Hōki" in this mountain retreat.[6]

Notes

1. The inlet at Yoshizaki (吉崎, Headland of Good Fortune) is a small sheltered bay in the rocky, wind-swept coast of Kaga and Echizen provinces. Four miles west of Zenshō Temple, the inlet marks the border between the two provinces. (See Map 10, 107.) The Pines of Shiogoshi (汐越, Tide Crossing) grew on the headland above the inlet's narrow, shallow mouth, where the tides flow in and out of the bay. According to a 1685 book, there were about a hundred pines on the headland, with names like Gosho Pine, Neagari Pine, Hizatsuki Pine, and Midare Pine; and "since ancient times people have made poems about them" (Kohl).

   Today, a memorial to Bashō's visit to the Shiogoshi Pines is located in the pines along the coast southwest of the headland.

2. Commentators note that the verse Bashō attributes to Saigyō (*yo mo sugara arashi ni nami o hakobasete tsuki o taretaru shiokoshi no matsu*) is probably by someone else. "A useless finger" alludes to Book 8 of the third-century Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*: "he who has a sixth finger forking out of his hand has sprouted a useless digit" (trans. by Burton Watson).

Bashō's pass on writing a poem about the pines recalls the assertion of the anonymous author of *An Account of a Journey to the East* (c. 1242). After crossing the Fuwa Barrier in Mino Province, the author wrote, "I passed the spot in silence, feeling that it would be worse to produce an inferior poem than to preserve no memento of the occasion at all" (McCullough, *Japanese Prose* 426).

3. Bashō's text says Tenryū Temple in the castle town of Maruoka, but the temple is in Matsuoka, four miles south of Maruoka. This Sōtō Zen temple was founded in 1653 as a sub-temple of Eihei Temple. (See note 6 below.) Without dates from Sora's diary after Sora left the pilgrimage, commentators speculate about the dates of Bashō's final stops. One suggestion is that Bashō stayed at Tenryū Temple from September 23–24 (8.9–8.10).

***Top**: The shallow inlet at Yoshizaki marks the border between Kaga and Echizen provinces.*
***Bottom**: Pines along the headland and coast southwest from Yoshizaki Inlet.*

4. Hokushi (d. 1718), a student of Bashō's, was a sword sharpener and polisher by profession. He eventually gained recognition as one of "the top ten disciples of Bashō" (Sato 124, note 313).

   Before Sora departed from Yamanaka, he, Bashō, and Hokushi composed a haikai sequence known as "A Sequence of Three Poets in Yamanaka." Sato includes a translation of it in *Spring and Autumn Passages* (160–165). Hokushi recorded Bashō's comments on original and alternative verses in the sequence, providing insight into Bashō's composition and teaching methods (Sato 166–184).

5. Poems and messages were written on paper fans. Commentators suggest that Bashō and Hokushi wrote a poem each on a fan, then tore the fan in two, each keeping the other's poem (Kohl). Sato cites an earlier version of Bashō's poem and quotes Hokushi's response: "laughing, I set out into the mist, newly resolved" (*warōte kiri ni kioi ideba ya*) (124, note 314).

   Tearing apart of a fan is a gesture to mark the end of summer since the fan is no longer needed as autumn temperatures cool (Kohl). The tearing apart also suggests the parting of the two poets. Bashō ends his verse with the word "nagori" (余波) —"waves that remain after the wind has subsided" or "aftermath" (in my translation, "backwash of time"). Bashō uses "nagori" earlier to describe his eight-day rest stop in Sakata (33. Echigo Road, note 1). Written with different characters (名残), "nagori" also means "sorrow of parting."

6. From Tenryū Temple, Bashō visited Eihei Temple in the foothills four miles to the southeast. (See Map 10, 107.) The temple's founder, Dōgen (1200–1253), studied Zen Buddhism in China from 1223–1227, then returned to Japan; based on his master's teachings, he established Sōtō Zen, which advocates "single-mindedly meditating" (只管打坐, shikantaza) as the way to enlightenment. Dōgen founded Eihei Temple in 1244; his title is Zenji (禅師, Zen Master).

   "Thousand li from Hōki" (邦機千里) is a phrase from classical Chinese, with Hōki referring to the capital city (Corman and Susumu 113). Eihei Temple was

Tenryū Temple in Matsuoka, a branch of Eihei Temple.

100 miles north of the capital of Kyōto. Dōgen went to the mountains of Echizen so he could live monastically and escape sectarian disputes and attacks by other sects that viewed Sōtō Zen as heresy for its teaching that enlightenment could be achieved by just single-mindedly meditating. Dōgen rejected the political power, material wealth, and worldly fame sought by other Buddhist leaders who lived in and around the capital. His mausoleum, Jōyōden, is located on the temple grounds beyond the gate.

Today, Eihei Temple is a complex of 70 buildings and a mecca for Zen pilgrims from around the world. It's one of two Sōtō Zen head temples in Japan. The other one, Sōji Temple, was moved to Yokohama after a fire in 1898 destroyed the original temple in Ishikawa Prefecture.

Cedar-lined path to Karamon (Chinese Gate), the imperial entrance at Eihei Temple.

42. Fukui

Fukui was only three li away, so after the evening meal, I left Eihei Temple and walked uncertainly along a dusky road.[1] In Fukui lived a long-time recluse named Tōsai. What year was it when he sought me out in Edo? Long ago, more than ten years.[2] Was he aged and feeble or had he already passed on? I asked about him and learned that he was still alive and doing fairly well.

Secluded inside this town was a small run-down house; moonflower and snake-gourd vines grew thickly around it, and its door was hidden by amaranth and broom-grass. So this must be his place. When I knocked on the gate, a shabbily dressed woman appeared and said, "From where have you come on your pilgrimage, honorable priest? The man of the house has gone to visit so-and-so nearby, so if you have some business to take care of, please look for him there." She must be his wife, I thought. I felt as if I had been drawn into a scene from an ancient tale.[3]

Before long, I found Tōsai and stayed two nights with him before leaving to see the mid-autumn full moon over the port of Tsuruga.[4] Tōsai accompanied me. With the hem of his kimono tucked up comically into his sash, in high spirits, he served as my guide on the road.

Notes

1. Fukui is seven miles west of Eihei Temple. (See Map 10, 107.)

Tōsai's house in Fukui. Yosa Buson (1716–1784).

2. Originally from Kobe, Tōsai was an established poet in Fukui (Kohl). He belonged to the Teitoku haikai school (Barnhill 168, note 150. Bashō mentions Teitoku in "39. Yamanaka"; see note 4.)

3. "A scene from an ancient tale": Bashō alludes to the eleventh-century courtly romance *The Tale of Genji*. The two plants growing at Tōsai's house, moonflower and broom-grass, are chapter titles in *Genji*. Moonflower (夕顔, yūgao, lit., "evening face," i.e., moon) is the white flower of the bottle-gourd vine; broom-grass (hahakigi, lit., "broom tree"), is a grass from which brooms are made, but it also refers to a legendary tree that appears in the distance, then disappears as a person approaches. Metaphorically, the tree represents a lover who seems open to courtship, yet withdraws when courted.

Moonflower (Yūgao) Wikimedia Commons.

In "Chapter 4. Yūgao" ("The Twilight Beauty" in Tyler's translation), Genji visits his former wet nurse who lives, like Tōsai, in a neighborhood of "cramped and shabby" houses. One of the houses has a fence covered with moonflower. Genji pursues the fragile young beauty who lives there, nicknamed Yūgao, but loses her when she is killed by a jealous apparition. Like Bashō's narrative, the Yūgao chapter includes melancholy reflections on transient human relationships and life: "What home is ours forever?" (Tyler 55). The chapter ends on the first day of winter, with "cold rain . . . falling from a mournful sky" (Tyler 79)

The moonflower and broom-tree foreshadow Bashō's upcoming visit to Tsuruga to view the mid-autumn full moon, which, like the broom-tree, proves elusive.

4. Mid-autumn is considered the best season for moon-viewing (月見, tsuki-mi) because of its clear, cool weather. The mid-autumn full moon, on 8.15, is known as *meigetsu* (名月, Celebrated Moon); according to popular belief it's the brightest moon of the year.

Bashō expressed his passion for moon-viewing in verse:

mid-autumn's celebrated moon: I circle the pond all night long.
meigetsu ya ike o megurite yomosugara (1686)

awakening nine times so far: the moon at four a.m.
kokono tabi okite mo tsuki no nanatsu kana (1691)

Two years before his journey to Oku, in the autumn of 1687, Bashō went on a moon-viewing journey to Kashima Shrine, 50 miles northeast of Edo. In autumn 1688, on his way back to Edo, he walked 130 miles in five days up the mountainous Kiso Road to view the moon over Mount Obasute near Sarashina Village in Shinano Province (Nagano Prefecture). He describes the journey in *Sarashina Journal*. One of his traveling companions, Etsujin, celebrated the successful journey in verse: "Sarashina: three nights of moon viewing, no clouds (*sarashina ya miyosa no*

tsukumi kumo mo nashi). As in his moon verse about sharing an inn with the two prostitutes at Ichiburi (34. Ichiburi), Bashō imbues his own Sarashina verse with pathos: "shadow of the past: old woman crying alone, companion of the moon" (*omokage ya oba hitori naki tsuki no tomo*). The mountain's name, "Obasute," translates "throwing grandmother away"; legend has it that old women were abandoned there by villagers to save food during the winter (Sato 19).

"Kehi Pine Beach, Tsuruga Bay, Echizen Province." Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

43. Tsuruga

Mt. Shirane was no longer in view; Mt. Hina appeared loftier ahead.[1]

We crossed Asamutsu Bridge and saw the "reeds of Tamaē," flowering tufts spiked up. We passed Uguisu Barrier and went over Yunō Mountain Pass to Hiuchi Fort. At Mt. Kaeru, we heard the first wild geese of the season.[2]

At twilight on the fourteenth, we looked for lodging in Port Tsuruga.[3] The sky that night was exceptionally clear, and I wondered if the following night's weather would be just as ideal for viewing the full moon; the innkeeper replied, "Along the Koshi Road, it's difficult to predict if the next night will be cloudy or clear."[4]

After he offered me some saké, we went on a night visit to the illustrious deities of Kehi. At this shrine is the mausoleum of Emperor Chūai[5]; the grounds are steeped in divine antiquity. Moonlight filtered through the pine trees, and the white sand in front of the shrine appeared to be covered with hoarfrost.

In ancient times, the second Yugyō Shōnin [Itinerant Holy One] vowed to dry out the boggy areas around the shrine so worshipers could come and go easily. He cut grass and transported earth and rocks himself. His ancient precedent has not been lost: sand is still carried to the shrine and dedicated to the gods. The innkeeper said the practice is called "Yugyō's sand-carrying."[6]

moonlight pure on the sand carried here by Yugyō[7]
月清し遊行のもてる砂の上 / *tsuki kiyoshi yugyō no moteru suna no ue*

The innkeeper was right about the fickle weather; on 8.15, it rained.

mid-autumn's celebrated moon: north country weather, always changing[8]
名月や北国日和定なき / *meigetsu ya hokkoku biyori sadame naki*

Notes

1. Mt. Hina (比那, written 日野, Hino, on modern maps) is about 15 miles south of Fukui, at the head of the valley leading up to Yunō Mountain Pass. In a verse not included in *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*, Bashō wrote: "for tomorrow's moon, Mt. Hina portending rain? " (*asu no tsuki ame uranawan hina-ga-dake*).

2. Bashō lists poetic places and historical sites along the road from Fukui to Tsuruga. Asamutsu Bridge, mentioned in ancient stories, is about four miles south of Fukui, around where the road from Mino Province (Gifu Prefecture) joined the Hokuriku Road. Bashō composed the following verse about the bridge: "Asamutsu: dawn departure for a moon-viewing journey" (*asamutsu ya tsukimi*

no tabi no akebanare).

The location of the Reeds of Tama-ē (玉江, Jewel Inlet) is uncertain. Seeing flowering reeds, which are common along the roadside in autumn, apparently reminded Bashō of the poetic place. He wrote: "behold the moon! the reeds of Tamaē uncut" (*tsukimi seyo tamae no ashi o karanu saki*). Reeds were cut in autumn for thatching roofs and making mats.

In Bashō's time, the Uguisu Barrier was no longer there. Yunō Pass and Mt. Hiuchi were battle sites of the Gempei War. Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154–1184), commander of the northern Genji, garrisoned troops at Mt. Hiuchi; the fort was attacked by the Heike forces from Kyōto, and the Genji were driven out (Sato 126; McCullough, *Tale* 227). Bashō wrote: "is this the mountain where Yoshinaka awoke? a plaintive moon" (*yoshinaka no nezame no yama ka tsuki kanashi*). Yoshinaka's troops retreated north to Echizen and later crushed the Heike forces at Kurikara Valley, through which Bashō and Sora walked on the way to Kanazawa.

***Top**: Mt. Hino (Hina), on the road to Tsuruga. **Bottom**: Asamutsu Bridge.*

Yunō Pass, Echizen Province. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

(See "36. Kanazawa," note 1.)

Along with "reeds" and "moon," "wild geese" (鴈, kari) is an autumn season-word; the name of Mt. Kaeru puns on "kaeru," "return," alluding to geese returning annually from Siberia to spend winter in Japan.

Wild geese, reeds, and moon. Shoson Ohara (1877–1945).

3. Tsuruga is a port town 31 miles south of Fukui, on the southern shore of Tsuruga Bay. (See Map 10, 107.) Bashō and Tōsai arrived on September 28 (8.14), most likely after having stopped overnight on the way there (Kohl).

4. Koshi (越, Crossing) is another name for Hokuriku (North Lands), the region through which Bashō just walked, along the Sea of Japan coast from Echigo to Echizen. (See Map 11, 163.)

   "Koshi" refers to the three provinces in the region that have the character 越, "koshi," in their names, pronounced "echi-" or "etsu-" in the sinicized reading of the compound names: Echizen (越前, Front-Crossing), Etchū (越 中, Middle-Crossing), and Echigo (越 後, Back-Crossing).

5. Established in 702, Kehi Imperial Shrine was the most important shrine in Echizen Province. Bashō says that the mausoleum of Chūai is here, but commentators note that its location is uncertain.

   Like the deities of Shiogama Shrine in Mutsu, those worshiped at Kehi are referred to as myōjin (明神, illustrious deities). Seven deities are venerated at the shrine. Izasawake, a kami of food worshiped by Emperor Ōjin (r. 270–310), is enshrined in the main hall (*Kojiki* 287–289). Ōjin and his parents—Emperor Chūai (r. 192–200) and Empress Jingū (r. 201–269, as regent)—are also worshiped here.

6. Yugyō Shōnin II was a priest named Ta-a (1237–1319). Kohl summarizes the origin of the sand-carrying at Kehi Jingū (referred to as Myōjin Shrine in the following passage):

   > There was only a short distance between the Myōjin Shrine and the Saihoji Temple, but the space was occupied by a muddy swamp where malevolent black and white dragons lived. This was a deplorable situation so Yugyō II wrote out a sacred talisman and buried it in the swamp, and then with the help of the nuns of the Saihoji and the local people,

Kehi Imperial Shrine.

he hauled sand to fill the swamp. This story is related in *Ippen Shōnin Ekotoba Den*.

An annual ceremony was held to commemorate Yugyō Shōnin II's good work: sand from Tsuruga Bay was transported to the shrine in a cloth hung from two bamboo poles.

Yugyō Shōnin I was Ippen (1239–1289), a Pure Land priest who traveled around Japan to spread the teachings of nembutsu (recitation of Amida Buddha's name to achieve spiritual awakening). He was a hijiri, a priest working outside of Buddhist orthodoxy among the common people. (See "23. Matsushima," note 9.)

The title Yugyō Shōnin (Itinerant Holy One) was given to Ta-a, who continued Ippen's work, and to subsequent heads of Yugyō-ha (Itinerant School), a sect of Pure Land Buddhism. *Ippen Shōnin Ekotoba Den,* the source of Kohl's description of the origin of sand-carrying, is an early fourteenth-century illustrated biography of Ippen and Ta-a, in 10 scrolls.

7. The forty-fourth Yugyō performed the sand-carrying in 1689, just before Bashō arrived in Tsuruga (Sato 128, note 330).

8. For notes on Bashō's passion for moon-viewing and on mid-autumn's full moon (*meigetsu*, 名月, Celebrated Moon, on 8.15), see "42. Fukui," note 4.

In autumn 1687, Bashō's moon-viewing journey to Kashima Shrine was also disappointing due to the weather. When he and his two companions arrived in the afternoon, the skies were cloudy and it started to rain; the full moon rising in the evening was hidden. Near dawn, a break in the clouds allowed some light from the setting moon to shine through. Excited, Bashō roused the others, but the full moon never appeared: "We sat for a long time in utter silence, watching the moonlight trying to penetrate the clouds and listening to the sound of the lingering rain."

> It was really regrettable that I had come such a long way only to look at the dark shadow of the moon, but I consoled myself by remembering the famous lady who had returned without composing a single poem from the long walk she had taken to hear a hototogisu [cuckoo]. (Yuasa 67)

The disappointing moon-viewing at Tsuruga recalls an earlier disappointment, when Bashō wandered around Asaka Marsh looking for katsumi, without luck (13. Asaka Hills). The twelfth-century poet Saigyō identifies such disappointment ("sad longing") as the essence of appreciating beauty in a fleeting, uncertain world:

were the world
without falling blossoms
or the clouded moon,
I could no longer live
in sad longing.

44. Iro Beach

On the sixteenth, the skies cleared. We went by boat seven li across the bay to look for small shells called masuō at Iro Beach.[1] A man named Ten'ya made meticulous preparations for our trip, including lunch boxes and small bamboo cylinders of saké; he also sent servants to accompany us on the boat.[2] With the wind behind us, we arrived in no time.

Along the beach were a few fishermen's huts and a forlorn Hokke temple where we drank tea and warmed up saké against the lonely feeling at dusk.[3]

lonelier than Suma's autumn, autumn at this beach[4]
寂しさや須磨にかちたる濱の秋 / *sabishisa ya Suma ni kachitaru hama no aki*

between waves: mingled with hagi litter, small shells[5]
波の間や小貝にまじる萩の塵 / *nami no ma ya kogai ni majiru hagi no chiri*

I asked Tōsai to write an account of this day and left it at the temple.[6]

Notes

1. Iro Beach is on the west side of Tsuruga Bay about five miles north of Tsuruga Port. Bashō writes its name 種の濱 (Iro-no-hama); on modern maps, it's written 色の濱, literally, Beach of Colors, or Colorful or Colored Beach. The following verse by Saigyō inspired Bashō's visit: "Because they pick small *masuho* [masuō] shells that dye the tides, they must call the place Colored Beach" (*shio someru masuho no kogai hirou tote Iro no hama to wa iu ni ya araran*) (Sato 130, note 332). Masuō are small clam-like bivalves, about one-third inch (8 mm) wide, with reddish or yellowish brown shells that resemble petals. The shells are washed up onto the beach by waves.

2. Ten'ya owned a shipping company in Tsuruga, and was also a poet. Earlier, Sora had stopped in Tsuruga on his way home to Nagashima; although he didn't meet Ten'ya, he left a letter informing him of Bashō's upcoming visit (Kohl).

3. The temple that Bashō visited is called Honryu today (Kohl). Hokke is a Buddhist sect founded by Nichiren (1222–1282). Bashō describes the temple as "wabishiki," 侘しき—"miserable," "dreary," "lonely." As an aesthetic term, "wabi" also expresses an appreciation of unadorned, simple, natural beauty.

4. Suma, a coastal area on the Inland Sea, is 24 miles west of Ōsaka. It was known

since ancient times as a place of sabishisa (寂しさ, loneliness) especially in autumn with a melancholy wind blowing in from the sea. The eleventh-century romance *The Tale of Genji* describes Suma, where Prince Genji goes into self-exile, as a desolate place, "extremely isolated," with "hardly a fisherman's hut to be seen." (Tyler 229).

After visiting Suma Beach in 1687, Bashō wrote in *Notes from a Travel Pack* that he couldn't find words to express the sadness and loneliness he felt there, even in early summer. He went to Ichinotani, an ancient battlefield near the beach, where the Heike army was routed in 1184 by a small force led by Genji commander Yoshitsune. Bashō saw in his mind's eye the Imperial Family fleeing in disarray onto a barge and lamented, "ancient sorrows abide at this beach, the sound of its breaking waves full of grief." (On the literary convention of battlefield lamentations, see "25. Hiraizumi," note 6.)

At Iro Beach, near the end of his journey to Oku, Bashō uses the verb "kachitaru," "to judge superior to," to assert that Iro Beach in autumn feels even sadder and lonelier than Suma Beach, just as previously he implies that Nata Temple in the autumn wind evokes more sabishisa than the famous Ishiyama Temple in autumn moonlight. Sabishisa is an emotion that derives from an awareness of an individual's solitude in a fleeting world. Both sabishisa and wabishisa (see note 3 above) are rooted in a Buddhist view of life and are essential and esteemed qualities of Zen poetry and art.

Bashō uses references to famous places in the classical canon like Suma and Ishiyama to express the intensity of emotions he felt at little known places in the provinces. (See "38. Nata Temple," note 3.)

5. "Between waves" recalls the phrase "a beach where waves break," which Bashō uses earlier to describe the sorrowful world of the prostitutes at Ichiburi. (See "34. Ichiburi," note 5.)

Hagi (bush clover) blooms then scatters its petals in autumn. (See the photo of hagi petals scattering in the notes to "34. Ichiburi," 111.)

Autumn afternoon at Tsuruga Bay. Iro Beach is on the peninsula to the left.

The shore south of the town of Iro Beach.

6. The note that Tōsai wrote and Bashō left at the Hokke temple (which, according to Kohl, still has it) explains the connection between the twelfth-century poet Saigyō and Iro Beach:

> It appears to have been Priest Saigyō who, enamored by the view of the sea at Kehi, moved to see the colors of Colored Beach and left for us a keepsake, a poem about small *masuho* shells. As a result, even the smallest patch of land around here keeps speaking his name, soothing the heart of anyone with a poetic turn of mind who wanders between the tides. Over the years I had thought of coming over here, but now Bashō Tōsei, of Edo, has come to this beach by way of touring a number of provinces. Invited on the same boat, I have picked small shells, wrapped them in my sleeves, and put them in a cup, so I might relive the days of that famed priest.
>
> Written by Tōsai, of Fukui, Echizen
>
> small bush clovers, fall: small masuō shells, small saké cups
> *ko-hagi chire masuho no kogai ko-sakazuki* (Tōsai)

(Qtd. in Sato 153, endnote 25. "Tōsei" [Green Peach] is a pen name Bashō used before he used "Bashō.")

Masuō shell collected at Iro Beach.
www.saigyo.net

45. Ōgaki

Rotsū came to Tsuruga to meet me and accompany me to Mino Province.[1] We arrived in Ōgaki,[2] aided by horses. Sora came from Ise Province and Etsujin sped over by horse; we met at Jokō's house. Zenenshi, Keikō and his sons, and other good friends came to visit day and night.[3] They were both joyful and consoling, as if meeting someone who had returned from the dead.

The weariness of my journey still lingering, on the sixth day of the ninth moon, I boarded a boat again, on my way to Ise to pay my respects at the transfer of the sun goddess from her old to her newly built shrine.[4]

clam's body leaving its shell: autumn passing![5]
蛤のふたみにわかれ行秋ぞ / *hamaguri no futami ni wakare yuku aki zo*

Notes

1. Rōtsu was an eccentric poet-wanderer and a student of Bashō's who was supposed to have accompanied Bashō on the journey to Oku; When Rōtsu left Edo unexpectedly, Sora took his place.

2. The castle town of Ōgaki, capital of Ōgaki Domain, was about 40 miles southeast of Tsuruga. (See Map 11, 163.) Bashō and Rotsū arrived there around October 16, the third day of the ninth moon (Naga-tsuki, 長月, Long-moon), the last moon of autumn.

3. Etsujin was a fabric dyer from Nagoya and a student of Bashō's. He had accompanied his teacher on a moon-viewing journey to Sarashina in autumn 1688. (See "42. Fukui," note 4.) Jokō, a former samurai like Bashō, had become a priest. Zenenshi and Keikō were samurai of Ōgaki Domain. Keikō's sons were students of Bashō's (Kohl).

4. For Bashō, the wanderer, the end of one journey was the beginning of the next. On October 19 (9.6), he, Sora, and Rōtsu left Ōgaki by boat for Nagashima, 20 miles south of Ōgaki. (In *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*, boats and rivers are recurring images of travel, life, and the passage of time.) Nagashima, where Sora was raised, is an island where the Ibi, Nagara, and Kiso rivers meet before entering Ise Bay.

   Ise Imperial Shrine, dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, is in a hinoki forest in the hills of southern Ise Bay. Amaterasu is said to have chosen the site for her dwelling during the reign Emperor Suinin (29 BC–70 AD). To keep her spirit forever young (tokowaka), her shrine is rebuilt on one of two adjacent lots every 20 years, and the goddess is moved from the old shrine to the new one, a periodic rebirth, like the sun rising every morning. In 1689, a rebuilding was completed,

hence Bashō's reference to the transfer of the goddess.

Bashō, Sora, and Rōtsu spent three days in Nagashima with relatives of Sora before departing for Ise. They attended the dedication of the new outer shrine, on October 26 (9.13), but didn't attend the dedication of the new inner shrine, on October 23 (9.10) (Kohl). As Bashō notes in *Weather-Beaten-in-Fields Journal* (*Nozarashi Kikō*), Buddhist priests, including lay priests like himself, were not allowed to enter the inner shrine at Ise; they had to say prayers from outside the shrine boundary.

5. "Autumn passing" (行秋, yuku aki) recalls "spring passing" (行春, yuku haru) in Bashō's verse of departure "2. Setting Out."

"Futami" is a pun on futa-mi, the lid and body of a clam, and Futami, a cove near Ise, known for its clams. ("Futami ni wakare" also translates to "departing for Futami.") Clam shell and body separating is a metaphor for leaving the shelter of a house for naked life on the road. In "Account of the Dwelling-in-Illsuion Retreat," Bashō describes his homelessness with two similar metaphors: "I'm like a mino-mushi (moth larva) without its cocoon, a snail without its shell." "Clam's body leaving its shell" is another statement of his commitment to life as a wandering poet. Before his journey to Oku, he sold his house in Edo (1. Before Departure); setting out, he tells the reader, "I wanted to depart with just my body, no encumbrances" (3. Sōka).

When Bashō returned to Edo from his journey, he tried to stop writing poetry, realizing it was an attachment to the illusory world Buddhism taught him to escape; but, he explains, "every time I [stopped], a poetic sentiment would solicit my heart and something would flicker in my mind" (Ueda 169). He continued writing, and till the end, his wavering mind plagued him. In 1694, on a journey from Edo to Ōsaka, he fell ill from dysentery and passed on. In his last verse, composed four days before his death, he sees himself as a wanderer in limbo rather than a faithful believer on his way to the Pure Land of Amida: "on a journey, ailing, dreams on

Ōgaki Castle.

a withered field, going in circles" (*tabi ni yande yume wa kare no o kakemeguru*). While his prose and poetry suggest moments of enlightenment, those moments, like other human experiences, vanish in the flow of time.

***Top**: From a bridge over the Ibi River in Ōgaki, looking south toward Ise Bay.*
***Bottom**: Torii and front gate of Ise Imperial Shrine in 2014, the year after the sixty-second rebuilding of the shrine.*

Postscript, by Soryū,[1] Genroku 7 (1694)

In *Narrow Roads of the Deep North* the reader will find the old and withered, the young and charming, the bold and resolute, the meek and uncertain. At times I stood up spontaneously and applauded; at other times I laid down, cut deeply to the core. Once I had a straw raincoat on, eager to travel; then seated, I was content with the marvelous scenes brought before my eyes. The writer's brush evokes all kinds of emotions that, like the shark-man's bloody tears, turn into jewels.[2] What a journey! What a poet! Sadly, such a gifted man has now grown frail, his eyebrows frosted with age.[3]

Notes

1. A scholar, poet, and calligrapher, Soryū copied of Bashō's final version of *Oku no Hosomichi* in the early summer of 1694. During the five years since the journey's end, Bashō had revised the text extensively. Soryū's copy is the basis of modern translations of the work.

2. "Shark-man's bloody tears": an allusion to a folktale about a shark-man (鮫人, kōjin, aka samebito). Exiled from the undersea palace of the Eight Great Dragon Kings, the shark-man lived near Lake Biwa; when he wept from homesickness, his tears of blood turned into jewels, for the man who took pity on him and provided him with food and a pond to live in. A version of the story is told in "The Gratitude of the Samebito," in Lafcadio Hearn's *Shadowings* (1900).

3. A month after Soryū made a final copy, Bashō set out from Edo on his last journey. While in Ōsaka, he passed away in November, 1694, and was carried to Ōtsu, on the southern shore of Lake Biwa, where he was buried at Gichū Temple. (See "Bashō's Life" 154–156.)

"Ueno in Iga Province" Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces. Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858).

Iga-Ueno Castle

Background and Contexts

1. Bashō's Life

Note: The details of Bashō's life in the following narrative are from Ueda's biography in *Bashō and his Interpreters*, except where in-text citations indicate other sources.

Japan's most celebrated poet was born Matsuo Kinsaku in 1644 to a low-ranking samurai family that farmed for its livelihood in Iga-Ueno, a castle town thirty miles southeast of the capital of Kyōto. His coming-of-age name was Munefusa (also read Sōbō).

In 1675, as he was establishing himself as a poet in Edo (later renamed Tōkyō), he took the pen name Tōsei (Green Peach). In 1681, a student gave him a bashō (banana plant), which he planted for shade at his house in Fukagawa, an area of reclaimed land in the delta of the Sumida River near the shore of Edo Bay. The house was dubbed Banana-Plant Retreat (芭蕉庵, Bashō-an). The poet changed his pen name to Bashō because he identified with the qualities of the plant:

> Its leaf is wide enough to cover a koto. At times, blown down midway, it pains you like the phoenix's broken tail or, like a torn green fan, it sorrows in the wind. From time to time its flowers

Bashō (banana plant) and moon. Kano Yosenin (1753–1808).

> bloom but they are not florid, and though its stalk is thick, it is never axed. Comparable to "useless trees in the mountain," it is noble in character. Monk Huai-su ran his brush on it, while Chang Heng-chu, looking at its new leaves, gained strength for greater learning. I do neither; simply idling beneath its leaves, I admire the way they tear easily in wind and rain. (Sato 48)

Bashō was still a boy when his father died in 1656. During his youth Bashō served the Tōdō family, relatives of the domain lord. He became friends with the eldest son, Yoshitada, two years his senior. The two shared an interest in poetry and had verses published in an anthology compiled in Kyōto in 1664. In 1666, however, when Bashō was 22, Yoshitada died, and a younger brother took over the household.

Perhaps because the prospect under a new master wasn't promising or because he wanted to pursue his interest in poetry, Bashō left the service of the Tōdō family. He continued to visit Kyōto and to write and publish verses. In 1672, he compiled an anthology in which he judged pairs of verses by 36 local poets, including himself; his informed, insightful commentary suggests his promise as a poet. The anthology was dedicated to a Shintō shrine in Iga-Ueno.

In 1672, Bashō moved to Edo, the eastern city that had become the political, economic, and cultural center of the nation under the Tokugawa Shogunate. Initially, Bashō lived in Nihonbashi, at the city's center. He worked at various jobs; from 1677 to 1680, for example, he was employed in canal maintenance.

Kiyosumi Garden in Fukagawa, near the site of Bashō's Retreat. In the nineteenth century, the land was bought by the founder of the Mitsubishi Company, who built the current garden.

But his reputation as a poet grew, and by 1678, he was recognized as a master of haikai (linked verses; see "Literary Traditions," 156), which meant he could earn fees from students seeking instruction and advice. But Bashō struggled to make a living as a poet-teacher; "the magic spell of poetry," he once lamented, led him into a life of rootlessness and poverty:

> Because of this spell, I abandoned everything and left home; almost penniless, I have barely kept myself alive by going around begging. How invincible is the power of poetry, to reduce me to a tattered beggar! (qtd. in Ueda, *Matsuo Bashō* 169)

In 1679, Bashō became a lay Buddhist monk. In 1680 he moved to the house in Fukagawa (Banana-Plant Retreat), which was donated to him by Sugiyama Sampū, a wealthy merchant and student of his. Around 1682, he studied Zen meditation under the priest Butchō

In the winter of 1683, the Banana-Plant Retreat was destroyed by a fire that swept through the neighborhood. His students collected donations and built him a new retreat near the one that burned down. A few months after the fire, his mother passed away. When he returned home to Iga-Ueno in 1684, his older brother showed him a lock of their mother's gray hair, which moved Bashō to tears: "in my hand, my burning tears would melt it: autumn frost." The fire and his mother's passing intensified his sense of the uncertainty and transiency of human life, which is at the core of Buddhist philosophy.

His journey home that year was the first of a series of five journeys about which he composed poetic travel narratives. The first narrative, *Weather-Beaten-in-Fields Journal* describes the 1684–1685 journey from Edo to Iga-Ueno and other places around Nagoya and Kyōto.

Three narratives followed: *Kashima Journal*, about a moon-viewing visit in autumn 1687 to Kashima Shrine; *Notes from a Travel Pack*, about a journey in 1687–1688 from Edo to towns in the Nagoya area, then home to Iga-Ueno and also to Ise, Yoshino, Nara, Ōsaka, Hyōgo (Kobe), Suma, and Akashi; and *Sarashina Journal*, about a moon-viewing journey in 1688, from Nagoya to Sarashina, on his way back to Edo. His masterpiece, *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*, about his 1689 journey from Edo to Oku, follows in 1694, the year of his death. In these narratives he portrays himself as a homeless wanderer in a fleeting world.

After the Oku journey, Bashō spent two years in Iga-Ueno, Kyōto, and Zeze and Ōtsu, two towns on the southern end of Lake Biwa. He worked with students while recovering his health before making the journey back to Edo. During this period, he lived for four months as a recluse at an abandoned, run-down retreat in the wooded hills south of Lake Biwa, about a mile west of Ishiyama Temple. The retreat was named "Dwelling-in-Illusion Retreat" (Genjū-an) after a monk named Genjū who once lived there. In the account

of his stay, Bashō explains that he was not someone "utterly enamored of quiet and tranquility, wishing to vanish into the mountains or fields without a trace," but "because of my poor health, I've lost interest in company, so I've become like a recluse, weary of the world." Reflecting on his passing life, he sums up the regrets he felt:

> As I think at length about the months and years that have drifted by, I realize the mistakes a bungling person like myself has made. There was a time when I envied samurai who serve a lord and are awarded income-producing land; and once, I considered withdrawing from the world and becoming a Zen monk. Instead I've tormented my body

***Top**: Path to Genjū-an (Dwelling-in-Illusion Retreat). **Bottom**: A reconstructed Genjū-an.*

> wandering like a windblown cloud that arrives nowhere, struggling to express feelings in poetry about birds and flowers. For a while now, this has been my life's pursuit, and in the end, lacking other talent or ability, I've devoted myself to it. ("Account of the Dwelling-in-Illusion Retreat")

He concludes his reflections by asking, "Doesn't everyone live in a house of illusions?"

Bashō also stayed at the House of Fallen Persimmons (Rakushisha) in Saga, northwestern Kyōto, the retreat of his student Kyorai. Here, Bashō worked on his account of his stay at the Dwelling-in-Illusion Retreat and on *Saga Diary*, a prose-poetry diary of his stay at Rakushisha.

After he returned to Edo in 1692, his students built him a new house in Fukagawa since he had sold his retreat before his journey to Oku. In 1693, Bashō took in Tōin, a nephew who was dying of tuberculosis. The son of Jutei, a woman he knew from his youth (and rumored to be his mistress), moved in to help with his nephew's care and household chores. Bashō was also busy meeting with students. In 1693, despondent after his nephew passed away and feeling overwhelmed, he expressed a nostalgia for his life as a recluse:

> Whenever people come, there is useless talk. Whenever I go for a visit, I have the uneasy feeling of interfering with other men's business. Now I can do nothing better than follow the examples of Sun Ching and Tu Wu-lang [two Chinese hermits], who confined themselves within locked doors. Friendlessness will become my friend, and [austerity] my wealth. A stubborn man at fifty years of

Rakushisha (House of Fallen Persimmons), Saga, Kyōto.

age, I thus write to discipline myself. (Qtd. in Ueda, *Matsuo Basho* 33)

For about a month, he refused visitors.

The following year, 1694, in poor health, Bashō was on the road again, to Nagoya, Ueno, Ōtsu, Kyōto, and Ōsaka, to work with students and settle disputes. Wistfully, he considered traveling farther, to Shikoku and Kyūshū. While staying at Rakushisha in Kyōto, he learned that Jutei had passed away at his house in Edo.

At the end of October, he fell ill in Ōsaka. Takarai Kikaku, one of his most accomplished students, wrote that the dying poet requested to be buried at Mumyō-an (Retreat of the Nameless), which his students had built for him in 1691 on the grounds of Gichū Temple in Ōtsu, on the southern shore of Lake Biwa. Bashō explained, "Genjū-an, where I found my first prop in a pasania tree, is too far from any human abode. I would rather have my grave by the side of Lord Kiso" (Takarai). After his death, his students carried his remains to Gichū Temple and buried him next to Lord Kiso, near a willow tree. They planted a banana plant at the gravesite. Takarai notes the appropriateness of the place, given Bashō's affection for beautiful landscapes:

> Our master had a particular love for scenic places. His grave is graced by Mount Nagara [to the west, near Mii Temple] and Mount Tanokami [to the southeast] and the waves of Lake Biwa that come right up to the temple gate. The boats going out leave their traces on the water, reminding us of the short span of our life. Deer on the

Summer dawn, northern Lake Biwa.

woodcutters' paths, wild geese flying over farm houses, the moon shining over the lake—all these add beauty to his grave.

If all that was beautiful in nature was fleeting, the poet's consolation was to be buried in a landscape that was beautiful in every season.

Gichū Temple was built during the Muromachi Period (1336–1573) to honor the spirit of the warlord Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154–1184), also known as Gichū (sinicized reading of the kanji 義仲, Yoshinaka). He was also

Mumyō-an (Retreat of the Nameless) at Gichū Temple.

Bashō's gravesite at Gichū Temple.

known as Lord Kiso, a name he adopted from the Kiso Valley in Shinano (Nagano), where he was raised. According to *The Tale of Heike*, Lord Kiso was "the son of a prostitute" (15–16). The twentieth-century author Dazai Osamu includes an anecdote about him in *Return to Tsugaru*:

> Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154–1184), a cousin of Yoritomo and Yoshitsune, had been brought up in the rural Kiso region and was not familiar with the finer points of etiquette as observed in the capital. He once offered plain, unsalted mushrooms to an Imperial vice-councillor, but the refined nobleman was so horrified at Yoshinaka's display of rustic courtesy that he could hardly force himself to touch his food and finally fled in confusion. (57)

Like Lord Kiso, Bashō was a rustic samurai who felt out of place in society. Shirane notes that Bashō's writings are "pervaded by liminal figures, the beggar, the old man, the outcast, the traveler—no doubt reflecting his own socially marginal origins" (Traces 11).

2. Literary Traditions

Bashō wrote poetry and prose in the context of literature that included linked verses (renga) and travel narratives from the Classical Period (710–1185) and Medieval Period (1185–1573).

Renga and Haikai. Bashō made his living teaching the art of renga—collaboratively-composed linked verses. One purpose of his travels was to meet with students in the provinces and recruit new students. During his journey to Oku, Bashō "took part in at least thirty" renga sessions (Sato 14).

Renga composition was established by the aristocratic poets of the Classical Period and adopted by the ruling samurai class during the Medieval Period. From the end of the Medieval Period through the Edo Period (1603–1868), the art spread to merchants and artisans living in towns and cities. Traditional aristocratic renga poets limited themselves to the archaic vocabulary, subjects, and images found in canonized classical works, so the art eventually became hackneyed. Poets often borrowed phrases and images from each other and used the same ones over and over again.

The town and city poets of the Edo Period introduced colloquial and vulgar language into their verses and a broad range of content from the daily life of common people. While their renga followed the composition rules of classical renga and used some of the same topics, poetic traditions were also "parodied, transformed, and translated" by the contemporary language and content (Shirane, *Traces* 2). The parodies resulted in humor, and the new works were called "haikai no renga" (俳諧の連歌, humorous or vulgar linked verses); eventually the term "haikai" was applied generally to literature and

art, humorous or not, produced by commoners. Haikai no renga flourished under master poets supported by students from the samurai, artisan, and merchant classes. Renga masters like Bashō led sessions to teach artful composition. The master set the starter verse (hokku), then applied the rules of composition and evaluated each student's contribution. Masters established schools, each with its own style and emphasis.

Bashō's poetics evolved. In Iga-Ueno and Kyōto, Bashō started to write haikai under the influence of the Teimon School, which "aimed at an elegant, humorous style made up of allusions to classical court literature, wordplay, and witty associations" (Ueda *Bashō*, 17). After moving to Edo, he adopted the poetics of the Danrin School, "which advocated a more plebeian style of poetry that freely used mundane subject matter and nonsensical comparisons to produce a more surprising, zany type of humor" (32). Later, his verses became more serious and somber and gained in emotional and spiritual depth under the influence of Chinese poets (like Du Fu, Li Po, and Han Shan), Daoist philosophy, the verses of medieval Japanese poet-wanderer Saigyō, and Zen Buddhism. After his journey to Oku, Bashō advocated quality he called "lightness" (karumi) as a way for poets to avoid heavy-handed sentimentalism or moralizing; he described karumi metaphorically as "the impression of looking at a shallow river with a sandy bed" (370).

Renga Composition. Japanese poetic structure and meter is based on syllable count. A renga sequence starts with a 17-syllable verse called a hokku, in three units of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. Poets participating in a session take turns adding verses to the starter verse, with each verse linking to previous verses via denotations, connotations, or associations, at the same time aiming to arrive at "new, unexpected meanings and perspectives" (Shirane, *Traces* 24).

The second verse had two units, with 7 syllables in each; the third verse, repeated the 5–7–5 syllabic pattern of the starter verse; then verses alternated in the 7–7 and 5–7–5 syllabic patterns until a sequence ended. (The 5–7–5 / 7–7 syllabic pattern of 31 total syllables was based on the 31-syllable classical verse form called waka.)

Renga sequences contained 36, 44, 50, 100, even 1,000 verses (Shirane, *Traces* 6). During the Edo Period, a typical sequence was 36 verses, divided into sho-ori ("first fold," with 18 verses) and nagori no ori ("remaining fold," with 18 verses). Ori, or fold, refers to the folding of a sheet of paper, with each fold having a front (omote) and a back (ura) (Sato 158–159).

In the eighteenth century, the 5-7-5 starter verse of a renga sequence (hokku), was recognized as an independent form called haiku. The development of a 17-syllable verse form independent of the renga sequence is apparent in *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*: of the 53 verses Bashō attributes to himself, only nine were originally hokku for renga sequences. The other verses were

composed or revised to fit the narrative context.

Travel Writing. Models for Bashō's travel narratives included earlier works like *A Tosa Journal* (c. 935), *A Sea Road Journal* (c. 1223), *An Account of a Journey to the East* (c. 1242), and *The Journal of the Sixteenth-Night Moon* (1279–1280). The anonymous *An Account of a Journey to the East* has many of the elements of Bashō's narratives: visits to historical and religious sites and poetic places; references to classical Japanese and Chinese literature; an interest in local geography and folklore and in common people and recluses; reflections on the transiency of human life. But as McCullough points out, Bashō's *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*

> stands alone among classical travel accounts in the variety and interest of its subject matter, the quality of its poetry and prose, and the complexity of its structure. Bashō makes extensive use of symbolism, allusion, metaphor, and wordplay, taking it for granted that his readers will possess a cultural background similar to his own, and that they will expect to find more in his work than appears on the surface. (*Japanese Prose* 24)

Haibun, or Haikai Prose. In a letter to a student, Bashō refers to the prose of *Narrow Roads of the Deep North* as haibun (俳文), which Sato defines as "haikai [俳諧] prose" (19)—short poetic sketches and reflections about places, events, and people. Sato summarizes the characteristics of haibun:

> A style of writing influenced by the Japanese adoption of poeticized Chinese prose . . . in Bashō's mind, something to contrast with *gabun* or elegant prose in classical Japanese. At times accentuated by verse, it was to be imbued with a modest, detached, transcendental sense, the sense that even the rustic and vulgar have poetry in them. Haibun, in short, is heightened prose shorn of sentimentality. In view of their polish, Baudelaire would have gladly called Bashō's best haibun—and [*Narrow Roads of the Deep North*] is the very best among them—prose poems. (32)

Narrow Roads of the Deep North is a series of haibun. Instead of verses contextualizing additional verses as in linked-verse sequences, Bashō uses his prose to introduce and contextualize the verses.

Kigo and the Poetry of Seasons. Figured in the passage of the four seasons, transient human life is a fundamental theme of renga (and later haiku). Each poem is placed in a seasonal context by a kigo (季語), or season-word. Kigo refer to plants, animals, celestial and weather phenomena, and festivals and events, associated with each season. Bashō's summer verses in *Narrow Roads*

"Autumn Grasses" (17th century; four of six panels of a screen painting). Metropolitan Museum, NY. **Two left panels**: *Susuki (pampas grass)*. **Two right panels**: *Hagi (bush clover).*

of the Deep North contain kigo like aoba (green leaves), hototogisu (lesser cuckoo), samidare (fifth-moon rains), semi (cicada), and unohana (fourth-moon flowers). His autumn verses contain kigo like wind, moon, River of Heaven (Milky Way), rough seas, dew, cricket, susuki (pampas grass), hagi (bush clover), ashi (reeds), and kari (wild geese).

Poetry of Place. In *Man'yōshū*, the first anthology of Japanese poetry (c. 479–759) over one-fourth of the 4,400 poems are travel poems. In subsequent centuries, the genre degenerated: court poets wrote "fictionalized" travel poetry about places they had never visited, merely citing the place names and using images from canonized poetry (Plutschow 132–134).

Unlike these poets, Bashō wanted to visit the places referred to in classical poetry (and historical and religious narratives), "places my ears had heard of, my eyes not yet seen" (3. Sōka). His aim, according to Sato, was to "fathom the truth expressed by those with poetic sensibility" (18). Before leaving Edo, his travel companion, Sora, prepared an eight-sheet memo of poetic places that he and Bashō might visit. During the journey, Sora noted in his diary what they found.

Bashō wanted to write poem about the poetic places based on not just what he had read in classical poetry, but also what he experienced, giving the places contemporary interpretations. By alluding to ancient poetry while expressing the thoughts and emotions of his own experiences, he was able to add depth to his compositions through comparisons and contrasts between the present and past.

3. Religious Contexts

Beyond the practicalities of meeting with students and traveling to see historic and poetic sites, Bashō also conceived of his journey as a pilgrimage. *Narrow Roads of the Deep North* records his visits to nine Shintō shrines and 17 Buddhist temples.

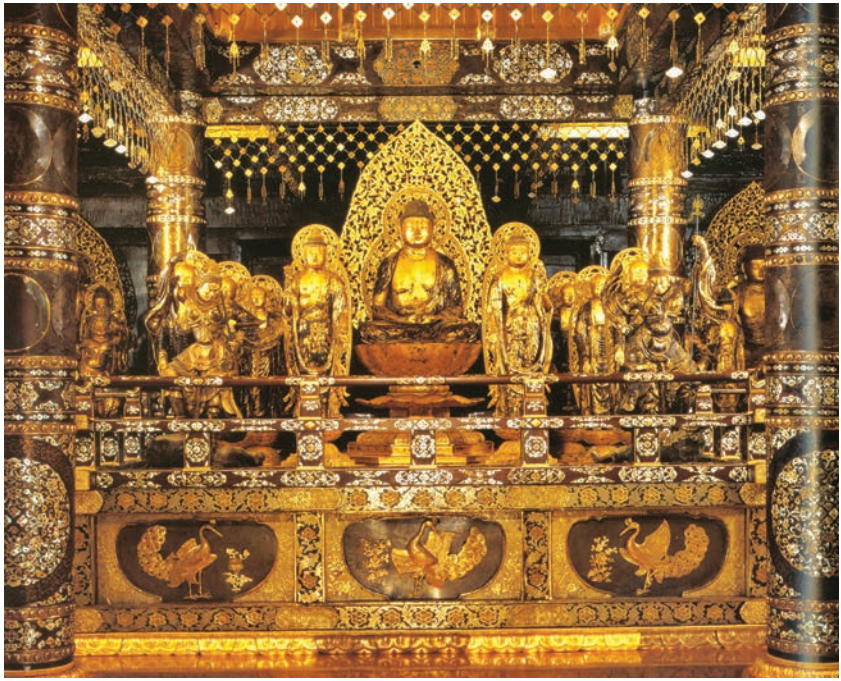
After an initial period of conflict between proponents of Shintō and Buddhism (see 9. Ungan Temple, note 4), syncretism prevailed. By Bashō's time, shrines and temples stood next to each other, and kami (Shintō deities) were worshiped as the protectors of the buddhas; or kami were worshiped at the same shrine-temple as avatars of buddhas called gongen. (See 30. Three Mountains of Dewa, notes 3 and 5.)

The kami are ancestral spirits or spirits embodied in nature (e.g., in the sun, moon, mountains, rocks, trees, waterfalls). Shintō worshipers thank these kami for blessings and pray for safety or success in this life.

Buddhist worshipers in Japan pray to various buddhas, particularly Amida, Kannon (bodhisattva of mercy), and Yakushi (buddha of healing), for compassion and relief from hardships and suffering in this world and for passage to the Western Pure Land after death. Buddhists aim to achieve enlightenment, which includes an understanding and acceptance that both happiness and suffering are illusions. The goal is detachment from illusory desires and escape from cycles of karmic rebirth, whether through esoteric practices and austerities (Tendai, Shingon, and Shugen), meditation (Zen), or faith (Jōdo Buddhism).

Bashō was religiously eclectic, worshiping at shrines and temples

Torii (gateway) at Mt. Haguro, a gongen temple-shrine; Gassan in the clouds beyond.



In the Hall of Light (Hikaridō), aka Golden Hall (Konjikidō), at Chūson Temple, Hiraizumi, a statue of the seated Amida Buddha, flanked by statues of Kannon, bodhisattva of compassion (left), and Seishi, bodhisattva of wisdom (right).

belonging to various deities and sects. About Zenkō Temple in Shinano Province, where four sects (Tendai, Jōdo, Zen, and Ji) worshiped together, Bashō wrote: "moonlight: four gates, four sects, simply one" (*tsuki kage ya shimon shishū mo tada hitotsu*).

Bashō's pilgrimage wasn't guided by a particular Buddhist doctrine, but by a search for a meaningful life in a fleeting world. He became a wayfarer in part to let go of attachments to this life in preparation for the next. On his way to the castle town of Sendai, he reflects, "a pilgrimage to remote places requires renouncing the body and resigning the self to transiency, even dying on the road, if that were heaven's will" (16. Iizaka). He sold his house in Edo before leaving (1. Before Departure) and wanted to carry as few worldly possessions as possible on his journey (3. Sōka).

In Kurobane, he and Sora prayed at a Shugen temple to start their journey (8. Kurobane). Shugen (修験, "achieving enlightenment through discipline and training") is a sect that combines Buddhism with the beliefs and practices of Shintō, mountain asceticism, and Daoism. Followers walk long distances under harsh conditions and climb to mountain temple-shrines like the Three Mountains of Dewa to be reborn into a more enlightened life in order to return

to this world to help others achieve enlightenment. The rituals and austerities along the way are intended to focus Shugen-ja (practitioners of Shugen) on attaining enlightenment, symbolically realized in ascending summits.

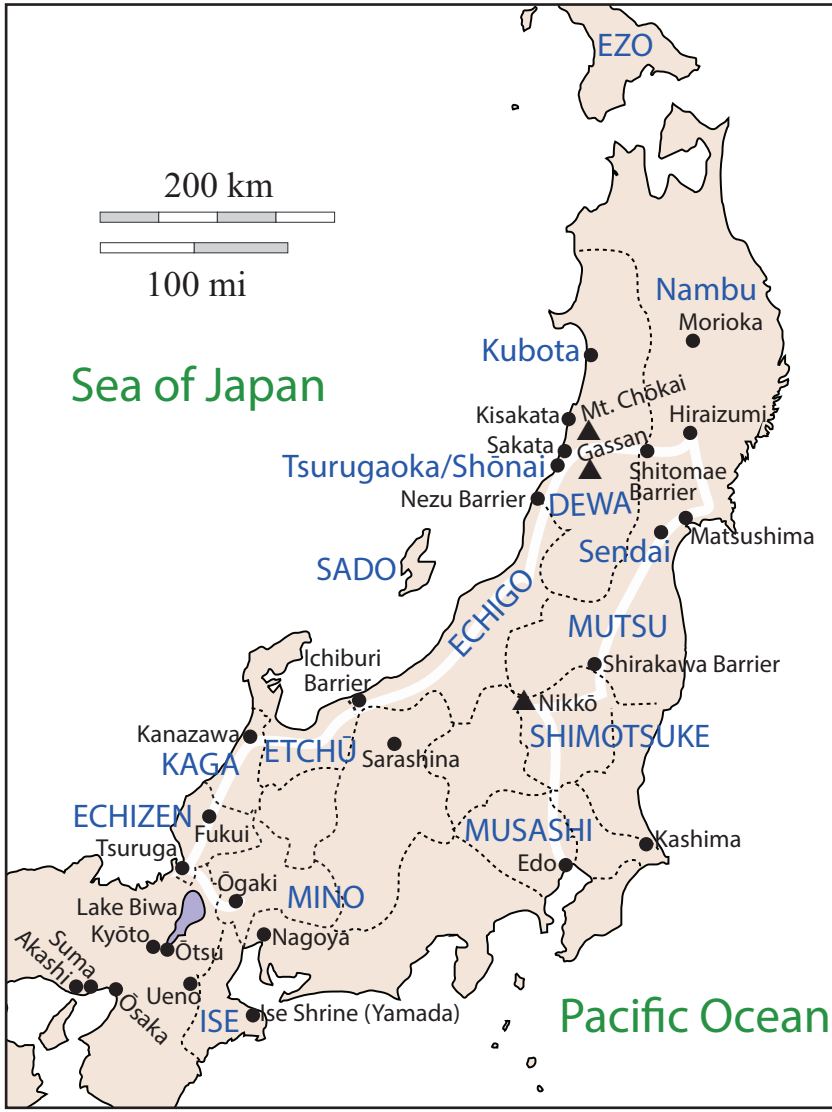
4. Geography and Roads

During the Edo Period, Japan was divided into provinces (国, kuni, aka shū, 州); large provinces were divided further into domains (庄, shō) and territories (領, ryō). The Tokugawa Shogunate, which ruled Japan from 1603 to 1868, awarded provinces, domains, and territories to lords loyal to them. These fiefs were divided into districts (gun, 郡) governed by administrators appointed by the lords. (Later, during the Meiji Period [1868–1912], when the nation was modernized, provinces and domains became prefectures, with new names. (In my notes, provincial names are followed by prefectural names in parentheses.)

From Edo, in Musashi Province, Bashō 1689 journey took him to the two northern provinces of Honshu island—Mutsu (陸奥) and Dewa (出羽). The two provinces were known together as Ō-u, 奥羽, a name that combines the sinicized readings of the second characters in their names (奥, ō, and 羽, u). In the title of Bashō's narrative, "Oku" is Japanese reading of 奥 and refers to Mutsu, the larger of the two provinces, on the Pacific Coast. Oku was also called Ōshū (奥州, Oku Province) and Michinoku (道奥, Road of Oku). On the way from Sendai to Shiogama, Bashō refers to a path along a hillside as "Oku no hosomichi," "narrow road of Oku," a phrase that he uses at the title of his narrative.

Oku was once inhabited by clans called Ezo or Emishi, both names implying barbarians; but the region had been pacified since the Heian Period (794–1185) by imperial forces sent from the capital (Nara, then Kyōto). By Bashō's time, Oku had been settled for centuries, with towns and rice fields along river valleys and on coastal plains. Far from the main cities of Kyōto and Edo, Oku was a rustic backwater, but it was also a heartland, where Bashō felt the presence of the ancients, and where memories of poetic places, historic battles, and folk traditions endured. "Oku" has been translated variously as "Far Towns," "Far Province," "Deep North," and "Interior." Perhaps "Deep North" (Yuasa's translation) conveys the feeling of "Oku" best in English.

In the second half of their journey, Bashō and Sora returned south from Dewa Province, traveling along the Sea of Japan Coast through a region called Hokuriku (北陸, North Lands), which included the provinces of Echigo, Etchū, Kaga, and Echizen (today, Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, and northern Fukui prefectures). These provinces lay north of the capital of Kyōto. The region was also called Hokkoku (北国, Northern Provinces).



Map 11. Provinces, Domains, Barriers, and Cities and Towns.

The journey ends in Mino Province (southern Gifu Prefecture), with Bashō departing from the castle town of Ōgaki to visit Ise Imperial Shrine, in Ise Province (Mie Prefecture). (See Map. 11 above and also "Map of Bashō's *Oku no Hosomichi*" at Google Maps for stops and approximate routes and distances between stops.)

Edo Roads. The national and provincial roads between major towns and cities like Edo and Kyōto were well maintained, in some stretches, packed with

gravel or paved with stones. Ditches were dug to drain off rainwater, and lined with embankments for protection from heavy rain and river flooding. Rows of trees were planted in places to create corridors of shade.

Markers informed travelers of how far they were to or from Edo. Distances were given in li, a traditional Chinese measure. In the Edo Period, one li was set as equivalent to 2.44 miles or 3.927 km. Bashō gives estimates in li that generally work out to one li equivalent to two to two-and-a-half miles.

Rural roads were less well maintained and marked than the main roads. On the road between Iizaka and the castle town of Sendai, Bashō notes the poor condition of the muddy roads during the midsummer rainy season (16. Iizaka). On a little-used road beyond Matsushima, he and Sora got lost and ended up unexpectedly in Ishinomaki. When he and Sora crossed the mountains from Sakaida to Mogami in Dewa, they need a guide because the "road" was a hard-to-follow, overgrown mountain trail (26. Shitomae Barrier).

During Bashō's time, publications such as *Illustrated Maps of All Provinces* (1685) and *The Travel Sparrow: Guide to All Provinces* (1687) provided travelers with maps of roads and lists and descriptions of famous places to visit (Nenzi 123–124). *The Travel Sparrow* contained detailed notes on sites between Kyōto and Edo and between Kyōto and Ise, but few details, aside from distances between places, for rural provinces like Mutsu and Dewa (Nenzi 134).

Post Towns. Along the main roads between major town, every five or six miles (farther apart in rural areas) were post towns (宿), shuku) which were required by the shogunate to maintain stations with porters and horses to carry travelers on official duty and their goods to the next station on the road. (See the print on p. 2.) The towns were also required to have at least one inn for such travelers. (See "Barrier Gates and Checkpoints" below on the service that the shogunate required of lords.) The post towns also provided lodgings, public baths, and restaurants for ordinary travelers like Bashō and Sora.

Barrier Gates and Checkpoints. In ancient times, barrier gates with forts and garrisons (関, seki) were established to protect lands controlled by the Imperial Court from attacks by Ezo clans. Later, during medieval times, when the country was divided and ruled by regional warlords, barrier gates guarded the borders of their domains and restricted the movement of people and goods.

During the Edo Period, after the country was unified under the Tokugawa Shogunate, barrier gates became checkpoints. Guards examined travel permits, searched for contraband, such as weapons, and kept a lookout for lawbreakers.

Provincial and domain lords were required in alternate years to travel to Edo with contingents of their samurai to serve the shogunate. When the lords returned to their lands, their wives and children remained in Edo as hostages to prevent the lords from plotting against the shogun. The barrier gates around Edo

ensured that wives and children of lords didn't leave Edo without permission.

Commoners like Bashō and Sora were allowed to travel on pilgrimages. Permits or passports to facilitate barrier crossings could be obtained from temples and shrines, local officials, village headmen, or landlords (Vaporis 137). Bashō and Sora record their passage through five barrier gates—Shirakawa, Shitomae, Muyamuya, Nezu, and Ichiburi.

Barrier crossings for commoners were generally routine, but because travelers were infrequent on the mountain road between Mutsu and Dewa provinces, Bashō and Sora were treated with suspicion by the guards at the Shitomae Barrier in Mutsu before being allowed to cross into Dewa. By contrast, the Dewa border guard provided them with lodging and recommended a guide to their next stop (26. Shitomae Barrier).

Transportation. While lords, ladies, and high-ranking government officials rode horses or were carried in palanquins, commoners like Bashō and Sora generally walked. Scholars estimate that a traveler walking nine to ten hours per day covered up to 22 to 25 miles (35 to 40 km); Bashō and Sora traveled between 10 and 28 or so miles between stops of one or more nights.

A sumptuary law on the books until 1871 made it illegal for commoners to ride horses, but the law wasn't rigidly enforced (Vaporis 26–27). In Nasu, Bashō borrowed a horse to get to Kurobane and attached a payment to the saddle before letting the horse find its way back home; and he mentions going on horseback from Kurobane to Sesshōseki and from Tsuruga to Ōgaki. Sora's diary records that their hosts provided Bashō with horses to get from Sukagawa to Koriyama, Obanazawa to Tateoka, Ōishida to Funagata, Mt. Haguro to Tsurugaoka, and Atsumi to the Nezu Barrier (Kohl). Sora also notes that at Niigata, during the hardest part of the journey, he and Bashō inquired about renting a horse, but the fee was too high, so they walked to Izumozaki (Kohl).

A Pilgrim's Outfit and Gear. Two items of a pilgrim's outfit became symbols of travel: straw sandals (waraji) and a broad-brimmed woven hat (kasa). (See the painting of Bashō and Sora on p. viii; also a photo of waraji, in "19. Sendai," note 5; and a photo of a kasa, in "39. Yamanaka," note 7.)

Because of his small frame and relatively poor health, Bashō carried only what he considered essential on his walking journeys: a rain cape (kappa), mulberry-paper coat for warmth (kamiko), a light kimono for bath and sleep (yukata), writing supplies (inkstone, ink sticks, writing brushes, paper), and medicines. He packed his gear in a travel pack (oi) of woven bamboo or light wood carried on the back. (See "15. Historic Traces of Satō Shoji," note 6, for a photo of an ancient travel chest made of wood.)

Bashō refers to a travel pack in the title of his account of his 1687–1688 journey, *Notes from a Travel Pack* (*Oi no Kobumi*).

5. Lunar Calendar and Annual Festivals

The opening lines of *Narrow Roads of the Deep North* establishes the passage of time and the transiency of human life as themes. In a framework of days, months, seasons, and annual festivals, Bashō portrays himself as a traveler aware of his fleeting life, which gives the narrative an emotional intensity as he weeps over traces of ancient warriors and visits places in Oku for the first time, knowing that he probably wouldn't (and never did) see them again. Awaré—the pathos felt by a person who is aware of time passing—imbues his narrative with sadness.

Lunar Calendar and the Four Seasons. Bashō's narrative was composed using dates of the lunar calendar adopted from China during the Nara Period (710–794). The lunar year began on the first day of the first moon of spring, which started with the second lunar cycle after the lunar cycle that contained winter solstice (Dec. 21).

Each of the four seasons consisted of three moons; each moon cycle equaled a month, with the twelve months numbered 1 to 12 and given names:

Spring / Haru (春)
1. Mu-tsuki (睦月 "Harmonious Moon")
2. Kisaragi or Kinusaragi (如月 "Moon of Changing Clothes")
3. Yayoi (弥生 "Increasing Life")

Summer / Natsu (夏)
4. U-zuki (卯月 "Moon of the U-flower")
5. Sa-tsuki (皐月 "Moon of Rice-sprouts")
6. Mina-tsuki (水無月 "Moon of Watering [Rice Fields]")

Fall / Aki (秋)
7. Fumi-tsuki (文月 "Moon of Literary Texts")
8. Ha-zuki (葉月 "Moon of [Falling] Leaves")
9. Naga-tsuki (長月 "Long Moon")

Winter / Fuyu (冬)
10. Kami-na-zuki or Kan'na-zuki (神無月 "Moon of Deities")
11. Shimo-tsuki (霜月 "Frost Moon")
12. Shi-wasu (師走 "Priests Running")

An intercalary month was added to a year, as needed, to keep the lunar months more or less aligned with the solstices and equinoxes of a solar calendar, also adopted from China.

Moon Phases and Dates. Dates in the lunar calendar were given with a moon number (1 to 12) and a moon-phase number (1 to 29 or 30, depending on the number of days from one new moon to the next). New Year's Day was 1.1, the first moon's first day; 3.1 was first day of the third moon. The first day of the lunar month started at midnight on the night of the new moon and went twenty-four hours to the following midnight.

The lunar calendar adopted from China was not precise because the calendar wasn't adjusted for the longitudinal coordinates of Japan. The dates of one Edo Period diary that recorded astronomical events were a day or two off. In 1684, Japanese astronomers tried to reform the calendar based on actual observations of the sun and moon, with limited success; as Renshaw and Ihara point out:

> Seeing the current calendar to be in error by up to two days, [astronomers] had an uphill struggle against a general obsession with astrology, mystic assumptions of the emperor, disinterest by the Shogunate, and their own lack of information from the "outside" world. . . . While they were able to get a more accurate version of an older (1282) calendar adopted from China, they were nevertheless restricted by time and place from making advances that would have truly made their observations meaningful.

The Meiji government adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1873, and translated lunar dates into Gregorian dates, creating confusion because a lunar date like 4.1, is not the same date as 4/1 (April 1) on the Gregorian calendar. The lunar date of the New Year, 1.1, is a different date on the Gregorian calendar each year because the lunar year started on a different Gregorian date

The moon gradually appears larger during the first ten nights of the lunar month.

During the second ten nights, the moons are fuller, with the full moon around the fifteenth night.

The moons during the last nine or ten nights wane and finally disappear from view on the twenty-ninth or thirtieth night, the moonless night known as the new moon.

each year. The lunar New Year starts somewhere between the third week of January and the third week of February, so lunar dates starting with 1.1 are up to seven weeks later than Gregorian dates. In 1689, the year of Bashō's journey, the year started on February 21. Bashō's journey began on 3.27, the 27th day of Yayoi (the third moon and the last moon of spring). In 1689, 3.27 was May 17; Bashō's narrative ends on 9.6, the sixth day of Nagatsuki (the ninth moon and the last moon of autumn), which was October 19.

My notes give lunar and Gregorian calendar dates based on a NASA moon table for 1689, adjusted from UTC to Japan Time (+9 hours). The Gregorian dates I give for lunar calendar dates are one day later than the dates that appear in other translations of Bashō's text. Since the first day of a new month started at midnight on the night of the new moon, I use the day after the new moon, not the day of the new moon, as the first day of the month.

Five Annual Festivals. During the Edo Period, the passage of the year was marked by five annual festivals celebrated as national holidays. In his allusions to four of the five festivals, Bashō recalls the seasons of his life, from childhood (spring) to adulthood (summer) to old age (autumn).

The five festivals originated in China and were introduced to and adopted by Japan's Imperial Court during its formative and classical periods (538–1185). The dates of four of the festivals fall on lunar dates with double odd numbers (3.3, 5.5, 7.7, and 9.9), considered auspicious in Chinese numerology (Shirane, *Four Seasons* 155). Customs and prayers were aimed at averting diseases and disasters and ensuring good health and longevity.

Dolls Festival. The first verse of the narrative (1. Before Departure) alludes to the second festival, the Dolls Festival (Hina Matsuri), also known as Girls' Day, celebrated on 3.3, the third day of the third moon: "time to let go of even my thatched retreat, now a house of dolls."

The festival was originally a day of purification; pollution believed to cause disease and misfortune was transfered to dolls made of grass or paper, which were then burned or tossed into a river to be carried away to the sea; by the Edo Period, daughters of prosperous town families were given elaborately dressed dolls representing figures of the Imperial Court. The dolls were accompanied by prayers for good health and happiness, which the figures of the Emperor and Empress and their attendants embodied.

In preparation for his journey to Oku, Bashō had sold his house to a family that had a daughter for whom, perhaps, Girls' Day dolls were displayed. The verse has a touch of wistfulness, as Bashō is reminded of childhood, and also of children, domestic life, and home, all of which he had forgone to pursue the life of a poet-wanderer.

Tango Festival. After visiting Io Temple in Iizuka on 5.1 or 5.2, Bashō composed a verse about the relics of two famous warriors, commander

Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–1189) and his retainer Benkei (1155–1189): "travel chest and long sword, too—in the fifth moon, honor both with festive banners." (See "15. Historic Traces of Satō Shōji," note 6.)

The verse looks ahead to the Tango Festival, celebrated on 5.5, the fifth day of the fifth moon, which by the Edo Period was called Boys' Day, a celebration of warriors. Samurai weapons, armor, and banners were displayed, and families prayed that sons would grow up to be strong and courageous, like the exemplary Yoshitsune and Benkei (Casal 70).

Bashō's verse about the Boys' Day festival conveys a mix of emotions—nostalgia (he grew up in a samurai family), admiration, sorrow, and regret. Yoshitsune and Benkei had achieved heroic stature in their early adulthood, but died young. Yoshitsune was 30 when he and his wife and children perished in a battle at Hiraizumi, and Benkei died three at age 34 while defending his lord. (See "25. Hiraizumi," notes 3, 4, and 6). Bashō was 45 when he wrote his verse about the warriors. He had lived over a decade longer than them, but felt regrets about his life as a wandering poet and doubts about what he had achieved. (See "Bashō's Life," 152–153.)

The festival's original name, Tango, indicates the start of the fifth moon: tan (端) means "start of" and go (午) refers to the horse, the Chinese zodiac animal associated with the fifth moon. The fifth moon marked the start of the midsummer rainy season, which was associated with diseases and flooding, so like the Dolls Festival, the Tango Festival was a day to pray for protection and good health. Bundles of ayame grass, thought to ward off evil and disease because of its sword-like leaves and medicinal properties, were attached to the eaves of houses. Arriving in Sendai on 5.4, the eve of the festival, Bashō composed a verse about ayame grass (19. Sendai): "ayame grass—let's bind it to the sandal cords over our feet." Having committed himself to life on the road, at home in sandals rather than in a house, Bashō and Sora secured protection for themselves on the long journey ahead.

Tanabata Festival. Celebrated on 7.7 (the seventh day of the seventh moon), the Tanabata Festival was also known as the Star Festival because it was associated with the legend of two star lovers, Vega and Altair, who were separated on opposite banks of the River of Heaven (Milky Way) and granted only one meeting a year, on 7.7, if the weather was clear (See "33. Echigo Road," note 4.). A brightly shining Altair on that night was believed to foretell a good rice crop, and a brightly shining Vega, the tutelary deity of silkweavers, portended prosperity for them; so it was a time for prayers for clear weather and consequently, good fortune; if rain fell on that night, it was called "namida no amé"—"rain of tears" (Hearn 14)

In the Imperial Court of Japan the Tanabata festival was an occasion to compose poems about the two star lovers, and the seventh moon became known as the "Moon of Literary Texts" (文月, Fumi-tsuki). Courtiers wrote

poems that expressed hope, longing, and anticipation of or appreciation for the meeting of the star lovers (Hearn 25–48)—a metaphorical way of expressing wishes that good fortune would come to the writer and readers.

As the night of the Tanabata Festival approached in 1689, Bashō was in Echigo, on the Sea of Japan coast. The imagery in his second verse in "33. Echigo Road" alludes to the festival's legend:

rough seas: the River of Heaven reaching over Sado

Sado was an island off the coast where felons and traitors were sent. Bashō felt an affinity for exiles because like them, he was homeless: in his early adulthood, he left home and in mid-life, he began his life as a poet-wanderer. In a prose introduction to his verse, he tells us that on the night he saw the River of Heaver over Sado he felt "the sorrows of the road"; "rough seas" have separated both the exiles on Sado and him from home; but the River of Heaven, hanging "across the heavens, stars glistening in cold clarity," was an auspicious sign, offering hope; his verse may be read as a prayer for the souls of exiles and wanderers. (See "33. Echigo Road," note 5; also, "34. Ichiburi," note 7.)

Chrysanthemum Festival. Celebrated on 9.9, the ninth day of the ninth moon, the Chrysanthemum Festival was held in anticipation of the cold weather of the last moon of autumn and the three moons of winter. Like the ayame grass of the Tango Festival, the chrysanthemum was believed to ward off sickness and promote good health and longevity. Customarily, chrysanthemum blossoms were infused into bathwater and saké.

The verse Bashō composed at Yamanaka Hot Springs alludes to this festival: "Yamanaka: no need to break off chrysanthemums for its redolent waters." Bashō was at the hot springs from 7.28 to 8.5, so the festival was still over a month away. The gist of his verse is that he didn't have to wait for the festival to pick chrysanthemums because bathing in the hot-spring water would restore his body and spirit. (See "39. Yamanaka," note 2.)

Later, when Bashō was in Ōgaki from around 9.3 to 9.6, and the 9.9 festival was only a few days away, he composed the following verse to start a linked-verse session: "chrysanthemum flowers, hurry and bloom, the ninth day will be here soon" (*hayaku sake kunichi mo chikashi kiku no hana*). Aware that he was entering the autumn of his life, he called on the flowers for help to fortify his body and spirit against the coming cold.

Note: The first of the annual festivals, the Festival of the Seven Grasses, was celebrated on 1.7. Seven grasses were gathered in the mountains, mixed in rice gruel, and eaten to ensure a foundation of good health for the coming year. This festival concluded the New Year celebrations, which began on 1.1.

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Summer Grasses, Autumn Wind

An Illustrated Translation of

Bashō's *Narrow Roads of the Deep North*

Recluse under a chestnut tree in Sukagawa. Ink painting and calligraphy from a scroll of Bashō's text. Yosa Buson (1716–1784). Kyōto National Museum

Postscript, by the calligrapher Soryū (1694)

In *Narrow Roads of the Deep North* the reader will find the old and withered, the young and charming, the bold and resolute, the meek and uncertain. At times I stood up spontaneously and applauded; at other times I laid down, cut deeply to the core. Once I had a straw raincoat on, eager to travel; then seated, I was content with the marvelous scenes brought before my eyes. The writer's brush evokes all kinds of emotions that, like the shark-man's bloody tears, turn into jewels. What a journey! What a poet! Sadly, such a gifted man has now grown frail, his eyebrows frosted with age.

Color Edition